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A BURKEAN ANALYSIS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESS
APOCALYPTIC RHETORIC

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

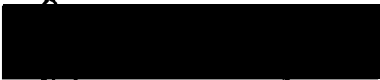
by
Katherine Elizabeth Kacarab
March 2011

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Approved by:




Juan Delgado, Chair, English

3/15/11

Date



Jacqueline Rhodes



David Carlson

ABSTRACT

According to theorist Kenneth Burke, a relationship exists between human culture and the language symbols that associate with it. Burke's Rhetoric of Identification operates off of ideas that humankind functions as the symbol using and responding animal and that persuasion can occur as a result of identifying one's cause with another's interests, which results in the ultimate goal of cooperation.

My thesis uses principles from Burke's Rhetoric of Identification to examine how apocalyptic prophecies foster and maintain an apocalyptic group identity. I chose to use the Jehovah's Witnesses as a sample apocalyptic group because they comprise a group with a heavy textual and symbolic focus on the apocalypse. My thesis seeks to examine how Jehovah's Witnesses foster and maintain their identity, despite incurring multiple failed prophecies.

I hope to expand understandings about how apocalyptic rhetoric promotes the formation of apocalyptic group identities through the use of the Rhetoric of Identification. My focus on the Witnesses helps reveal how group power structures, evident in the group's language, function to maintain self and group identity.

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Sincere thanks to you all.

To

David B. Baclian

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RHETORIC OF IDENTIFICATION AND ITS MOTIVE:
RETURN TO PARADISE

Introduction

A knock at the door and a Watchtower magazine both bring the promise of an earthly paradise as long as one becomes a Jehovah's Witness (hereafter referred to as Witness or Witnesses). If one does not, personal annihilation will result at the time of Armageddon, the site of an apocalyptic battle between good and evil. Current events, such as the Iraq war, the development of nuclear weaponry, famine, and natural disasters portray the consequences of human evil and inspire fearful questions about humanity's fate. Moreover, the main source of authority on these issues used by the Witnesses, The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT), and its supporting texts, such as The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom, evidences not only the ultimate voice of authority, Jehovah God, but also the apocalyptic events currently occurring and apocalyptic events projected to occur.

This textual evidence comprises Kenneth Burke's logology, or "words about words." In religious contexts, such words have moral connotations because they either induce or purge guilt (Carter "Logology and Religion" 3). Burke focuses on how these words about words are symbols that encourage cooperation and identification by appealing to symbol users (humanity). Such word symbols induce identification and cooperation further because words, according to Burke, foster both division and unity. Division and unity have significance for the Witnesses as they regularly distinguish between those of Satan's world and those in "the truth" within their literature. My thesis will explore how Witnesses establish division and identification by using apocalyptic words and images that reinforce their words' moral connotations. I will also examine the extent to which the group sees "Jehovah's favor" coming only through adherence to the group's moral mandates; this adherence (Burke's "unity") is vigorously maintained by the cycle of guilt, fear, and a necessary hope induced by apocalyptic language.

I hope to expand understandings about how apocalyptic rhetoric promotes group identity in religious contexts and demonstrate how religious discourse can promote a feeling

of safety and hope in a real - or fostered - sense of despair. My focus on the Witnesses expands scholarship on such a textually focused group, and it reveals how group power structures, evident in the group's language, function to maintain self and group identity. My emphasis on Burkean principles, as applied to the Witnesses, illustrates how their apocalyptic rhetoric possesses the features of Burke's Rhetoric of Identification, which helps to form and maintain group identity. Furthermore, building scholarship on the Witnesses develops further insight about similar groups that rely on literal textual meanings.

Burkean scholarship points to fundamental ideas about the primacy of language and the specific power that language has over its users, especially when related to identity. Fredric Jameson uses Burke to evaluate the ways in which ideology expresses itself through text, focusing specifically on the relationship between ideology and narrative (510). This relationship between ideology and narrative makes human intention inseparable from its scene or situation (513). In the case of the Witnesses, each Watchtower magazine expresses prophetic ideology about end times, and the text is said to contain Jehovah's voice because it derives from the Bible. Though Jameson argues

the inseparability of human intention from scene or situation, the assumed divine origins of such sacred texts give them authority and validity. Such an assumption disguises any human intention involved in sacred doctrine. The human element only appears when discrepancies in doctrine appear or when prophecies fail, but even in such cases, the doctrine or prophecy retain validity because they still identify with a divine origin.

Ann Branaman writes about how Burke conceives of the identity as a critical instrument, which builds "upon certain ways human use language to organize reality" (445). In this case, identity pertains to how individuals define themselves, through language, to comprise a social whole. Branaman highlights Burke's claim that the vocabulary and ideology of a given culture, expressed through text, motivates humans to organize and define their groups (446). For Witnesses, language organizes their group identity with the use of certain phrases such as "system of things," and being "in the truth."

Though Carolyn Wah notes a lack of scholarship on Witnesses, scholarship on how apocalyptic rhetoric promotes religious solidarity helps explain the function of the Witnesses' apocalyptic rhetoric. Scholarship on the

American jeremiad and the Second Advent proves a worthwhile starting point, since it provides a historical look at how Puritans used apocalyptic rhetoric to motivate individuals to build a new world with the prophetic assurance that this new world would alleviate ills in community life (Bercovitch 16). It is from this Puritan-base that the Witness sect derives.

Scholars also explore how apocalyptic rhetoric, in other religious settings, motivates goodness through fear and how end-time stories create a particular lived reality (Harding 16; Branaman 46). Witnesses appear to use apocalyptic rhetoric similarly, making this scholarship useful for my analysis. This scholarship also echoes Burke's ideas in The Rhetoric of Religion about how language contains belief and symbolizes authority, which begets order and thus, results in guilt (4-5).

Chapter 1 examines the fundamental role of symbols and language in social groups and includes some contrast on the main principles of Burke's rhetoric of identification with those of Aristotle's rhetoric of persuasion. Such a contrast emphasizes current rhetoric's appeal towards the inner self, which subtly moves people to action through fostering the desire to make ethical choices. This chapter

also includes a brief introduction to Burke's rhetorical principles, such as the symbolicity of language, the rhetoric of identification, dramatism and the pentad, unity and division, and the negative. Other features associated with these main principles, such as consubstantiality, hierarchy and order, and symbols of authority, will also be discussed.

Chapter 2 provides fundamental explanations about the purpose of religion for human identity and how apocalyptic rhetoric, as an aspect of religious focus, functions as a form of the Rhetoric of Identification using features, such as the empty metaphor, narrative form, time, and morality - all features that relate to Burke's "dramatism." This chapter also provides a historical background on the Witnesses and some of the religious ideologies from which their sect derives. This chapter begins to explore the various texts Witnesses use to inform themselves, and others, about the conduct of the group and the impending signs of the apocalypse.

Chapter 3 presents a textual and graphical Burkean analysis of Watchtower magazines to show how Witnesses demonstrate group inclusive behavior. My analysis consists of specific examples that display features of both

apocalyptic and identification rhetoric. These examples derived from a total of 148 Watchtower magazines, which span the years 1975 (a crucial, specific year for a predicted apocalypse), 1999 (a year commonly tied to apocalyptic events), 2002, and 2005 (these latter two because they comprise material I received from Witnesses). The Watchtower 2010 electronic library, which encompasses all published the Witness literature, also supplements my research.

Chapter 4 will focus on Witness beliefs and imagery that specifically address the apocalypse to demonstrate how apocalyptic rhetoric functions as a type of identification rhetoric. This chapter will explore both the features of identification and apocalyptic rhetoric in Witness texts and imagery, focusing on features such as morality, evil, and time.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion about group solidarity, fostered out of apocalyptic and identification rhetoric, which continues to survive after multiple, failed prophecies. This chapter offers theories about why groups continue to thrive despite their failed, and failing, prophecies. Finally, I discuss the possible future implications for the Witnesses, and similar groups, whose

power structures ensure not only the impression that the apocalypse is at hand, but also that they all must experience it while on the "good" side or ultimately perish.

The Fundamentals of Burkean Rhetoric

Before a Burkean analysis of Witness apocalyptic literature can ensue, one must first gain a foundation in the fundamental elements of Burkean rhetoric, particularly how the rhetoric of persuasion (Aristotle) shifts to the rhetoric of identification (Burke). While much of my material derives directly from Burke, some material will also consist of Burkean criticism provided by Virginia Holland and Ann Branaman to expand on Burke's theory as applied to apocalyptic rhetoric and to the Witnesses' use of apocalyptic rhetoric, which appears to foster and maintain their group's identification.

Symbolicity of Language

Burke argues that language is "symbolic action" (Language 1340). Burke argues further that humans realize this notion since man is the symbol-using animal (1343). Considering these fundamental Burkean arguments, language cannot exist unto itself. Instead, language functions as

communication (language in action). Intent can only be conceived through language, and action may consist of verbal and/or non-verbal language. In fact, humans must carry out their conduct (actions) primarily through the medium of language (Holland 31-32). Thus, Burke focuses on the ways symbols motivate action in human society, since language and action are inextricably tied.

Specifically, Burke's "chief contributions have been in. . .analyzing the ways in which language systems - philosophical, political, literary, and religious - describe and influence motives" (Bizzell and Herzberg 1295). If one wants to understand how and why a group operates a certain way, using Burke's argument, one must look to the group's language and determine patterns about the language features, such as unique, specific, and/or reoccurring phrases. These features may connect to group characteristics, such as established norms, ethics, or its environment. In this way, a group's language and actions distinguish it from other groups. As such, the role of identity ties also to the use of language as one identifies with one group by using its language and not the language of another group.

Persuasive Action

The rhetorical dimension of language exists within the action component of language. Burke explains that rhetoric is "rooted in an essential function of language itself" and that rhetoric is "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" [emphasis in original] (Rhetoric 1338). Inducing any sort of cooperative act must occur through the use of language because the language contains the group's social mandates. According to Burke, ". . .every judgment, exhortation, or admonition, every view of natural or supernatural reality, every intention or expectation involves assumptions about motive or cause" (Grammar 1302). Since language communicates human thought, one's actions inevitably result from language. It is the fact that one identifies with certain groups and not with others reinforces the rhetorical aspect within group language and makes worthwhile the examination of how language motivates and reinforces certain identifications.

Note that language induces identification, not necessarily the language user in all cases, which suggests an absence of conscious intent to persuade for the purposes of identification. That Burke uses the word "inducing" in

the above quotation implies a specific intent to induce; however, Burke's rhetoric differs from traditional notions of persuasion (as outlined by Aristotle). Since rhetoric and language tie inexorably through action, and since language functions as a necessary social medium, rhetorical persuasion already exists within it and can either be intentional or unintentional. Aristotle explains that persuasion is an intentional presentation to an audience, which uses ". . . five 'canons' or stages in the composing process known later to rhetoricians: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery" (Bizzell and Herzberg 175).

Burke does not argue against Aristotle's notion of the intentional construction of persuasive argument. Instead, he expands upon it, writing, ". . . though man is typically the symbol-using animal, he clings to a kind of naïve verbal realism that refuses to let him realize the full extent of the role played by symbolicity in his notions of reality" (Grammar 1343). With this view, the degree of deliberate, persuasive intent becomes difficult to decipher because it makes language and communication multi-dimensional. Language possesses a symbolic dimension while also containing a perceived, face value, empirical

dimension. One may use Aristotle's five canons, but communicate an unintended and infinite number of messages in addition.

For instance, when one uses the word "tree," the audience may make a multitude of associations, especially since The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols notes that the word tree is "one of the richest and most widespread symbolic motifs [that] would of itself fill a volume" (1026). Though the word "tree" may communicate a multitude of messages, a speaker or writer may consciously choose to use it to convey one aspect of many messages or may subconsciously choose it based on other subconscious symbol-induced feelings that urge its use. In this case, the rhetorician knows not that he or she functions rhetorically. In essence, all language users are rhetoricians.

This conscious/subconscious distinction separates Burke's rhetorical persuasion from Aristotle's notion of persuasion because Burke's theory of rhetoric includes the expanded possibility for subconscious response and even implies that the subconscious response may be more prevalent because it happens invisibly. Though rhetoric

may occur "invisibly," its effects are visible through human action, such as choice making.

Identification rhetoric reinforces the subconscious response since its elements consist of a "you and me" quality, which makes a topic easily relatable to an audience (Branaman 450). Further, according to Burke, "it is clearly a matter of rhetoric to persuade a man by identifying your cause with his interests" (qtd. in Holland21). Where relation exists, identification exists. This identification may occur intentionally or unintentionally, especially when considering Burke's concept of the self as audience.

The Self as Audience

When exploring a group's ideologies and actions, one should look to the individual and the way that the individual responds to the group's rhetoric while using it to persuade the self. Burke explains that where there is persuasion, an audience must be available to persuade (Rhetoric 1335). Aristotle implies that the audience exists external to the rhetorical persuasion; however, Burke offers that "a man can be his own audience, insofar as he, even in his secret thoughts, cultivates certain ideas or images for the effect he hopes they may have upon

him; he is. . .an 'I' addressing its 'me'" (1335). As such, a person may seek to identify his or her interests with those of a desired group, though this may not seem overt. One may not think deliberately, "I will do this or say that to be a part of this group." The actions simply ensue over time.

What makes identification with a particular social group desirable, according to Burke, is its level of cooperation. He writes:

The individual person, striving to form himself in accordance with the communicative norms that match the cooperative ways of his society, is by the same token concerned with the rhetoric of identification. To act upon himself persuasively, he must variously resort to images and ideas that are formative. (1336)

Formative images and ideas require action on the part of the audience. Formative images and ideas may include certain types of language. A prime example of formative images and ideas includes moral language.

Burke writes, "a modern 'post-Christian' rhetoric must also concern itself with. . .any ideas of images privately [addressed] to the individual self for moralistic or

incantatory purposes" (1335). Religious rhetoric operates as a form of identification rhetoric because it recognizes natural law. All societies possess a type of moral code because each individual theoretically possesses a moral code in his or her own conception of natural law (Lewis 16). If each individual possesses a moral code, language and symbols also must possess or reflect such a code. Word symbols must exist to communicate abstract notions of morality. Words as symbols for abstract notions will receive further definition upon discussing Burke's "negative."

Focusing on moral word symbols proves worthwhile when studying Witness literature because, as Burke states, "the basic function of rhetoric is 'the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents. . .'" (qtd. in Holland 21). Not only do Witnesses make heavy use of morally charged words in their literature to create motive, but also they add another dimension to the rhetoric of identification since they identify themselves as representative of Jehovah (as will be illustrated in Chapter 3). This identification imbues their words with not just human agency, but divine agency.

The Call to Action: Dramatism and the Pentad

Burke focuses not only on the symbolicity of language, but also on what directly results from that symbolicity: motive to act, which, in the case of my exploration, relates to moral action driven by the purpose to unify. Burke's term for this motive to act is "dramatism." Dramatism ". . .invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that. . .treats language and thought primarily as modes of action" (Grammar 1302). As such, one must look to the language of a group and at how the group uses its language to understand why groups behave as they do. This look at a group's language places humans in the category of actors who act out human conduct with purpose (Holland 31). The Witness motive behind their action is to unify, and this act is morally motivated, which my analysis will demonstrate further.

The human actor occupies a place in Burke's notion of "the Pentad," which:

considers man's action (human conduct) from five interrelated motivational or causal points of view. It considers the Act (names what took place, in thought or deed), the Scene (the background of the Act, the situation in which it

occurred), the Agent (the actor, or kind of person that performed the act), the Agency (what means or instruments he used), and the Purpose (motive or cause which lay behind a given act) [emphasis in original]. (Holland 64-65)

Within this notion of the Pentad, which describes all aspects of action within human societies, there exists the idea of ratios. Each component of the Pentad causes a relationship to form among the other components. What impacts one component will impact the others. How each component relates to another will determine a certain effect; however, one component may direct the others. If purpose drives the other components, in a religious setting, one may likely find that mysticism is the reason. For religious rhetoric, the purpose may be a worthwhile place to begin a dramatistic analysis as religious rhetoric contains a supernatural, divine, and ultimately, a mystical foundation for group motive and formation.

The Unitary Motive

The ideal outcome of identification rhetoric, according to Burke, resides in a motivation toward achieving "Ultimate Order," which he finds inherently present in the ways humans use language to affect

cooperation. Language based in cooperation contains a "guiding idea" or "unitary principle" behind the diversity of otherwise eternally "jangling voices." This concept of ultimate order leads to the ultimate purpose - to pursue and live the "good life." This "good life" is achievable through a sequence of actions that are developed one after the other (Burke Symbols 196). One may see that many human groups are divided; however, Burke argues that because societies experience "jangling voices," the motive to unite them over time appears. This unification must happen in a sequence where one act begets the next until achieving ultimate order.

Holland, in her commentary on Burke's "ultimate order," writes, "Man is actor, and human conduct is the act or action he performs in the great drama of living in order to achieve the end or objective of the 'good life'" (4). To achieve the good life, humans must participate in a drama where they can act and compel others to act towards this purpose for the benefit of all. This symbolic drama calls for a return to an Edenic paradise, which enables perfect communication.

This Edenic motive becomes a sort of prophetic allusion to return to Paradise, where Burke acts as the

prophet who “. . .envisions a society of the future in which communication approaches the ideal. As he sees it, no social system will have ideal communication unless it is based on a system of ideal co-operation. . .” (Holland 9). Burke's argument emphasizes a transcendent notion by espousing the idea that an ideal state is achievable. Such an ideal state exists in many human belief systems, including the Witnesses, who strive to support the return to God's original purpose of an Edenic earthly state.

Where there exists a call to return to paradise, there seems to exist a warning about, and requirement for, apocalypse. In Permanence and Change, Burke warns prophetically that society is on the brink of extinction due to a lack of successful symbolic communication, and thus, cooperation (163). These distinctions tie Burkean rhetoric directly to the purposes of apocalyptic rhetoric, and, in essence, place apocalyptic rhetoric in a Burkean category. Apocalyptic rhetoric, especially when used by Witnesses, motivates individuals and societies to return to a perfect state or perish. According to Burke, successful identification achieves societal perfection via cooperative communication.

The Negative, Ethical Choice, and Guilt

How one communicates the "good life" invokes the need for understanding the "bad life" so as not to identify oneself with it. The words "good" and "bad" signify Burke's concept of the negative or the "thou shalt not." Burke argues that the negative functions as a great motivational principle because it allows for ethical choice (Holland 49). If one understands how not to conduct the self, one understands how to conduct the self. Further, though "the negative" implies a "bad" choice, the term actually represents the abstract (as opposed to the concrete). The abstract is where notions of morality must reside since morality can only be conceived of within abstract language. Further emphasis on the role of the abstract will be made in Chapter 2 when distinguishing between sacred and secular symbols.

The role of conducting the self becomes important to humans since they have:

. . .the ability to entertain the idea. . .of freedom, which is itself grounded in the idea of a world beyond natural compulsions, that man is able to make a moral choice. Without this

ability, he could not entertain the idea of the negative. . . [emphasis added]. (Holland 49)

The existence of a universal conscience relies upon the negative. The universal conscience relates to the idea of natural law noted by C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity. Such a universal conscience must be understood in more of an abstract way, rather than a positive, concrete way. Burke writes:

. . .the negative is a peculiarly linguistic invention, not a 'fact' of nature, but a function of a symbol-system. . .that gives a body to the word 'no'" and "since 'No' is a principle rather than a paradoxical kind of 'place' or 'thing'. . .we are not so pressed to conceive of it in terms of an image [emphasis in original]. (Religion 20)

As such, the universal conscience does not exist as an image unto itself, so it must be contained in the realm of the negative. Burke creates a distinction between words and "The Word" because general words have an empirical connection to the thing they name, while concepts like the "supernatural" possess a different dimension (7). In this way, "The Word" becomes a way for abstract notions to adopt an empirical sense and become a "real" concept. One can

only determine the abstract quality of a concept by knowing what it is not, thus the need for the negative.

The realm of the negative contains "The Word" and becomes a symbolic resource that encompasses all "thou shalt nots," which, by default, enhances the division between them and the "thou shalts." This binary enables choice. Where choice exists, ethics exist. One makes a choice, and implicit in such an act is the not choosing. Here, again, is the idea of the positive and the negative where the positive signifies the choice and the negative signifies the non-choice. How one feels about making certain choices and not others may elicit guilt or fear if the chooser believes that he or she made the wrong choice or identification.

Burke's Identification Rhetoric Principles in General Religious Language

Applying Burke's theoretical principles to general religious language, and to its users, helps one understand how and why religious symbols obtain power. Most importantly, one needs to understand how, through the principles of Burkean identification rhetoric, absolute Truth identifies with religious word symbols thus giving

them power. This Burkean analysis helps illustrate how apocalyptic rhetoric obtains its persuasive power. First, apocalyptic rhetoric influences believers based on its identification principles, such as how it identifies with many aspects of its users' empirical life experience. Understanding the identifications present in general religious language, and specifically, in religious, apocalyptic language, will help to provide a foundation for analyzing the cohesive effect of apocalyptic rhetoric as exercised by Witnesses.

Consubstantiality, the Negative, and Authority

While humans use language to conduct their everyday lives, religious language provides a useful tool to organize larger understandings of and meanings for human existence. According to anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, religion contains vital cultural meanings within symbols that help explain human existence by giving it an ultimate meaning in a concrete way (98). These symbols can include concrete symbols, such as the Bible itself, or word symbols, such as the term "God." Both symbol categories, concrete and abstract, communicate ideas about the possible origins of and destinations for humanity.

Geertz notes that human cultures contain such a metaphysical concern and interest because there exists an incessant ". . .back-of-the-mind suspicion that one may be adrift in an absurd world" (17). To contend with such suspicion, religious word symbols help to alleviate back-of-the-mind anxiety by providing a sure sense of purpose and meaning for life and its destination. A word symbol commonly attributed to such surety is "faith" - faith that one possesses the Truth. This Truth provides many with the comforting assurance that their lives have meaning and may even transcend mere human flesh and much human suffering.

Burke's identification rhetorical principles, such as consubstantiality, the negative, and the power embedded in hierarchical authority, give concepts, such as faith and its promise of certainty, meaning and power.

Consubstantiality is the vehicle through which truth and faith come to identify, while the realm of the negative houses abstract concepts, such as truth and faith.

Consubstantiality is an aspect of identification rhetoric where A is identified with B, yet remains a separate entity from B. Consubstantiality recognizes both where A and B identify, while also recognizing that A is not B (Rhetoric 1325). In identifying A with B, A takes on B

characteristics and vice versa. In identification rhetoric, A does not ever literally become B, but A and B can so closely identify that they then unify. As a result, fostering consubstantial feelings among people and within their beliefs can lead to solid group formation. Not only do the meanings of words unify, but also the users of such words unify.

Sacred and Secular Word Symbols. The principle of consubstantiality applies strongly to the use of sacred symbols, especially as they develop a consubstantial identification with secular symbols. Examples of sacred word symbols used by Witnesses (and other religious groups) might include names for divine beings, including God, Jehovah, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, or terms for divine principles, including paradise, truth, heaven, hell, saint, or prayer. Examples of secular word symbols used by Witnesses might include general use terms, such as government, family, food, light, dark, sheep, or shepherd. These secular word symbols can possess both a concrete and abstract nature.

Sacred word symbols uniquely function as evidence for themselves. The word "God" cannot be anything but itself. As a result, the word symbol functions as its own

authority, but this authority can only exist when grounded in terms that speak to the human experience with authority. Deeper Burkean analysis reveals that religious word symbols obtain authority through a necessary identification with empirical (or secular) notions of authority. According to Branaman, "Any vision of ultimate order...must relate positively to reigning symbols of authority if it is to be effective" (451). Order and cooperative action require some form of authority to maintain them. Oppressive authority works to establish a sense of order out of fear, but openly accepted authority establishes order out of desire and acceptance. Identifying symbols with pre-accepted notions of authority establishes and maintains desire.

Symbols of Pre-Accepted Authority

Burke argues that, in theology, faith and reason develop a relationship; however, faith must precede reason and faith must derive from some notion of authority (Language 1342). Reigning symbols of authority often tie to psychological connections, such as family, father, teacher, doctor; economic connections, such as capitalism and business; or educative or legislative bodies, such as the Church, State, School, Government, Law, and other like

institutions (Holland 11). Such identifications establish an empirical and familiar social hierarchy. This familiarity creates a consubstantial relationship between the secular and the sacred when attributes from the secular and the sacred are adopted into one another so that they unify.

The word "Father" offers an example of how the sacred/secular relationship forms. "Father" is commonly attributed to God as in "God the Father." Making God a father figure imbues understandings of Him as not only a figure of authority, but also as a figure to which humans easily relate. Such a familiar relation gives the concept of "God" a tangible and human characteristic, which aids in building a personal relationship with Him. Further, when one derives one's faith from such a divine authority, one can then build a rationale for the belief because the premise for such a belief already exists (i.e. relationships with fathers on Earth exist). Theology's argument is based on the principle of "'Believe that you may understand (crede, ut intelligas)'" (Burke 1342). Theological arguments require faith as their foundation. Solid belief develops after faith develops.

The Abstract Negative. Though one can identify sacred symbols with familiar and readily accessible notions of authority, a distinction exists between secular and sacred symbols. Secular symbols ascribe to a positive, concrete realm, while sacred symbols ascribe to the negative, abstract realm of human consciousness. Moreover, ". . . sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos - the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood - and their world-view. . . ." (Geertz 3). While all language helps to organize reality, sacred symbols within language help humans define their life and identify it with a sacred and metaphysical purpose. Sacred symbols tie to ethos because they reflect and direct fundamental cultural values and beliefs. Further, sacred symbols can transcend the life's empiricism. Such transcendence may tie to Burke's revelation that in human language motivates the desire for ultimate order via attaining cooperative communication.

Yet transcending empiricism poses problems for humanity because one cannot deny the fact-based nature of concrete images. A table and the word "table" share a direct empirical relationship. Conversely, when one uses the word "God," at best, one can only connect the idea of

"God" to the word "God." Moreover, which God the word "God" refers to remains open to question without additional, empirical corroboration. This abstract connection leads to great ambiguity and flexibility in belief systems.

Identifying the sacred with the secular validates particular religious beliefs and enables one to continue to have faith in the Truth of divine principles because the secular qualities get adopted into the secular and vice versa. Geertz explains, "In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world-view describes. . ."

(3). Religious symbols, and the religious lifestyle of which they are a part, adopt the empirical authority of the secular worldview they describe. This adoption forms an identification between the sacred and secular.

For example, in an apocalyptic sense, if one sees concretely that the world suffers from wars, pestilence, and famine, and religion becomes an answer to that lived reality, the religious belief and associated symbols derive a truth value from the secular, concrete authority. If the religion poses to solve a real problem (via apocalyptic

prophecies) it becomes a real solution because the features of the solution consubstantially identify with the features of the problem. In this way, religious language absorbs two forms of authority: that of the concrete secular and that of the awesome sacred.

Similarly, language tied to the supernatural or the divine affects words used in ordinary, everyday speech (Samarin 11). If religious groups use certain terms that are identified with the divine, or as deriving from God's Word, which is captured in a physical, concrete, and textual way (in The Bible), they adopt a divine authority. This divine authority renders beliefs authoritative simply because they are divinely inspired; thus, they transcend the authority of mere humans.

O'Leary supports this assertion, writing that ". . .all mythic discourse. . .must present itself as authoritative" and that "the focus on sola Scriptura paradoxically necessitate[s] a new emphasis on interpretation; for the symbolic narrative is inherently ambiguous. . ." since ". . .the Bible (and apocalyptic prophecy in particular) very often employs language that is deliberately metaphorical and therefore inaccessible to a purely literal reading" (51, 54, 59). For one to access

the meaning of divinely authoritative religious symbols, one must seek one who is imbued with some sort of divine authority. Developing a consubstantial identification with God makes such imbuing possible. For Witnesses, this consubstantiality occurs when the Watch Tower and Tract Society (WTS) claims it adheres to the Bible as its authority in the inside cover of each Watchtower magazine. Emphasis on this adherence imbues The Watchtower (and its 14 unnamed authors who comprise the Governing Body of Witnesses) with Jehovah's divine authority and consubstantially identifies each with the other. As a result, the Bible and The Watchtower become equally divine and equally valid.

Further, when a person identifies himself or herself as being somehow divine or divinely chosen, such identification provides another way to access, and in a sense, become the divine. This divine human identity relates to the concept of the 144,000 chosen Witnesses, known as "The Faithful and Discreet Slave class," who believe the Holy Spirit inspires them with the knowledge that they are God's chosen people - chosen to serve with Christ in a Heavenly government over an earthly paradise (WT 1 May 1982: 10). Such identifications imbue a person

with a sense of divine responsibility. These identifications help "standard people" connect with "divine people" who can provide access to the divine. The motivation behind such connections lies in the want for and belief in an absolute Truth.

The Role of Persuasion

How people come to identify themselves as somehow divine or connected to the divine introduces questions about the role of persuasion. David Jasper writes that "'at the heart of religious rhetoric, quite distinctively, lies authoritative proclamation and not rational persuasion'" (qtd. in Warner 22). The divine and its symbols can be considered exempt from persuasion when used by the faithful. The faithful cannot (or do not want to) identify the divine as a persuasive entity. They have only come to believe in the divine because it is consubstantial with notions of absolute Truth. According to believers, absolute Truth should not require persuasion; therefore, if rhetoric ties to notions of persuasion, then divinely inspired word symbols subvert this overt persuasion. According to many believers, God's will does not have anything to do with the persuasive word games of human origins. Divine discourse transcends notions of rhetoric

for its users so much so that its rhetoric loses recognition as rhetoric by its audience and users. In this case, audience and user may comprise the same entity, according to Burke's notion of the self-as-audience.

Since symbols of authority already contain an accepted, pre-established social power, a silent rhetorical function can exist (Branaman 451). One may not believe one is being persuaded by a persuading authority because the authority is already established and accepted; therefore, one opens oneself up to a silent persuasion because the persuading authority gains trust. Consequently, identifying language as divine inevitably makes the divine entity rhetorical. All language is rhetorical when employed because all language is inherently symbolic and humanity responds to symbols (Burke Language 3).

C. Allen Carter argues that ". . .myths of origin can be used to mystify the exercise of power" and that the point is not to examine "the historical validity of such myths, but their rhetorical effectiveness" [emphasis added] ("Kenneth Burke" 356). Identifying an entity as divine symbolizes the rhetorical move. That groups exist because they share a common faith in the divine Truth of origin myths illustrates the presence of rhetoric in such myths.

Burke suggests that ". . .a rhetorical motive is often present where it is not usually recognized or thought to belong" (Rhetoric 1325). This idea emphasizes the possibility that rhetoric exists, even in the realm of the divine. It does not matter if such a realm actually exists; rather, it simply must be thought to exist. Such thinking, when shared, leads to group unification and action for a shared purpose - the perpetuation of the shared belief in an absolute Truth.

Eric Hoffer provides some key ideas that help magnify the ways Burke's identification rhetoric functions. Hoffer writes about "the true believer" and how this believer comes to identify with and eventually become one with a mass movement. Hoffer explains that mass movements (religious, social, nationalist) all possess common features, which include a "proclivity for united action" and a demand for "blind faith and single-hearted allegiance." Such faith, he argues:

organizes and equips man's soul for action. To be in possession of the one and only truth and never doubt one's righteousness; to feel that one is backed by a mysterious power whether it be God, destiny, or the law of history...these are

admirable qualifications for resolute and
ruthless action in any field. (122)

As Burke explains, the symbol not only creates meaning for symbol users, but this meaning motivates persuasive action. When one believes he or she possesses the Truth, all symbols and actions are then viewed through a Truth lens and become evidence for such Truth. Mass movements achieve such thinking by interposing:

. . .a fact-proof screen between the faithful and the realities of the world. . .by claiming that the ultimate and absolute truth is already embodied in their doctrine and that there is no truth nor certitude outside it. (Hoffer 79)

Consequently, everything identified with such a doctrine becomes a mutual reinforcement for the truth of the doctrine.

Sacavan Bercovitch offers an example of this reinforcement, writing that, historically, the emphasis in Protestantism on ". . .figural providence has a single purpose: to impose a sacred telos upon secular events" [emphasis in original] (52-3). When such a sacred telos, or purpose, consubstantially identifies secular events with divine qualities, those events are reasoned to happen

because God willed them to happen; thus, when the events occur, they evidence God's will, making it visible, meaningful, and true. As a result, "religious language is therefore unique; it is more than ordinary language serving a religious purpose" (Samarin 5). Religious groups conceive of God as an entity or force that transcends ordinary human existence. By default, identifying one's interests with God's interests functions as a form of identification rhetoric. Further, any symbols tied to God (divinity) also obtain an absolute Truth-value, whether concrete or abstract.

When Truth functions as a premise for others to join and believe in the same Truth, every successful group addition further validates the existence of Truth (and God's will) in action; therefore, people not only believe in their Truth, they enact it. Hoffer emphasizes that the success of a mass movement refers to the "instruments of unification and to means used to inculcate a readiness for self-sacrifice" (58). Identification rhetoric achieves both unification and self-sacrifice in motivating group formation and group solidarity. When groups identify and unify due to a shared Truth, division inevitably results because discrepancies exist regarding what makes truth

Truth. This division sets a stage for pain, confusion, and, ultimately, war. These conditions then become the motive for believing in the possibility for a new, better, peaceful order.

Burke shows how entwined language symbols become with the principles they symbolize. According to Thomas Joswick, Burke believes that theological doctrine illustrates how words about words epitomize the inherent symbolic quality of language and that “. . .the principles of theology and the principles of language come to be identified with one another. . .” (507). Thus, Burke’s theories apply to this particular exploration since the Witnesses use language to motivate themselves, and others, to unite and make real the abstract concept of perfect paradise. Further, Witnesses use language to motivate the making of moral choices to achieve and experience paradise.

Chapter 2 explores the features of apocalyptic rhetoric, while also illustrating how such features tie to Burkean rhetorical principles. This exploration demonstrates how apocalyptic rhetoric functions as a form of identification rhetoric through its applicability to many aspects of a user’s lived experience. My next chapter also provides definitions of apocalyptic terms, ideas about

the significance of the apocalypse for the formation of mass movements, and a brief history on apocalyptic groups leading up to Witnesses.

CHAPTER TWO
THE HISTORY AND FUNCTION OF APOCALYPTIC
RHETORIC AND ITS USERS

Apocalypse and Truth

Religious groups, such as the Witnesses, identify word symbols with both the secular and divine as a way to establish verification for their belief system, giving it a truth value. Further, religious groups espouse that only their group possesses the Truth about God and the future, despite the existence of other groups who believe they also possess the real and only Truth about the same subject. The Witnesses' rhetoric reinforces the notion that only they are authentic Christians espousing Truth, while the other so-called Christians comprise "Christendom," which represents an extension of Satan's organization (WT 15 Dec 2005: 24). Despite their claim to possessing and enacting absolute Truth, Witnesses have experienced multiple prophetic failures. When one believes one has access to divine Truth, the subcomponents of that Truth, such as any apocalyptic prophecies tied to it, also adopt a Truth-value.

As a result, "religion's great strength is its otherworldliness - the ability to posit truths that cannot be readily disconfirmed" (Bader 119). If one cannot see God, one can say that God does not exist, empirically, but because terms like "supernatural" or "otherworldly" or even the word "God" exist, the concept of God cannot be immediately denied. Hoffer adds that "one has to get to heaven or to the distant future to determine the truth of an effective doctrine" (81); therefore, the idea of "God" cannot be proven or disproven in the present. Though empirical truth(s) and absolute Truth differ in how each is deemed "true," religious groups, such as the Witnesses, use identification rhetoric to lessen the gap between empirical (secular) truth(s) and divine Truth by forming a consubstantial identification between the secular and the sacred realms - essentially making each realm one in the same.

Predicting apocalyptic events opens religious groups up to the possibility of prophetic failure thus threatening the entire established Truth of the religious belief and identity. Interestingly, while the Truth-value of the religion gives their belief in an impending apocalypse an appearance of fact, failed apocalyptic prophecies do not

always result in a failure of the religious belief or identity. The current Witness group expansion evidences that failed prophecies do not affect this group's religious belief despite its many failed prophecies predicted to occur in 1874, 1878, 1881, 1914, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1931, the early 1940s, 1954, 1972, and 1975 (Gruss 122).

Since religious groups do not always dissolve after the failure of their prophecies, it could be suggested that the power of apocalyptic rhetoric does not reside in its Truth-value, but rather in the group identifications it fosters. Apocalyptic rhetoric presents notions of being left out, left behind, or being permanently removed from the paradise everyone else will eventually experience. As Burke emphasizes, language speaks to the subconscious of an audience and reflects what particular cultures desire (consciously or subconsciously). If humanity desires ultimate order and cooperation, then the purpose for apocalyptic rhetoric may not be to reveal apocalypse, but to call for togetherness in the face of only a possible apocalypse. Failed prophecies do not necessarily devalue the Truth of the religion in which they originate because, according to Stephen O'Leary:

the story of the apocalyptic tradition is one of community building, in which human individuals and collectives constitute their identities through shared mythic narratives that confront the problem of evil in time and history. (6)

Humanity cannot escape the concepts of time and evil. Identifying with groups that contend with these problems (such as religious groups) provides a form of compensation for perceived deprivations. Religious groups also directly speak to making moral choices that connect with subconsciously embedded natural laws that, in theory, help to avert one from making poor choices that result in some kind of pain. According to Holland, ". . .all men have patterns of experience which are universal, permanent, and recurrent" (27). These patterns comprise elements, such as morality and evil, time, and the narrative existence of human life (all have a beginning, middle, and end to their life story). These features also comprise the principle tenets of apocalyptic rhetoric, which one would expect considering Burke's notion that language reflects cultural identifications and co-operations.

The Definitions and History of Apocalyptic Rhetoric

Common Apocalyptic Terms

When referring to apocalyptic rhetoric and its related terms, one actually refers to the notion of eschatology. According to O'Leary, eschatology derives from the Greek eschatos, which means furthest or last. O'Leary explains further that apocalypse is a Greek word meaning "to reveal or unveil" and that it is a discourse that embodies the revelation of an Ultimate End and the Last Judgment. It is during this Last Judgment that good and evil will be dealt with appropriately (6).

The term "Armageddon" associates with the apocalypse, but these are not the same. Armageddon refers to the site of the apocalyptic battle between Jesus (the King of Kings) and the trilogy of the Antichrist: the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (Dominguez n.pag.). The word appears in Revelation 16:16, which reads "And they gathered there together to the place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon" (NWT). Armageddon only represents an aspect of the Revelation authored by St. John, and though the terms "apocalypse" and "Armageddon" are often used interchangeably, they do not represent the same thing.

Another major term associated with apocalyptic terminology is "millennium." According to Catherine Wessinger, "the term 'millennium' originally referred to a period of one thousand years foretold by the New Testament Book of Revelation (Apocalypse) to be the period of Christ's reign on earth" and that millennialism generally "refers to the expectations of an imminent and collective salvation accomplished according to a divine or superhuman plan" (48). Millennialism originated in Judeo-Christian theology, but now applies to any movement that espouses similar millennial beliefs (Wessinger 48). A distinction must be made, however, between groups that espouse pre-millennial beliefs and post-millennial beliefs.

Pre-millennial groups have a more catastrophic focus since, according to their beliefs, humanity cannot prevent the reign of the antichrist. Robbins and Palmer add that "Premillennialist fundamentalism arose. . .as evangelical protestants confronted what they saw as an increasingly degraded modernist culture" (10). As a result, Christ's must intervene to conquer the Antichrist at Armageddon prior to the establishment of the millennial thousand-year reign. Pre-millennial groups focus on divine power.

Post-millennial groups, however, view human agency as a key component to Christ's return because, through human agency, culture can gradually be "Christianized"; thus, post-millennial groups advocate a partnership between human action and divine action in terms of reforming and cleansing society (Robbins and Palmer 9). The "new premillennial" doctrine expands the concept of Christ's Second Coming through the belief that Christ will have two Second Comings. In the first "Second Coming," a "secret rapture" occurs where Jesus returns secretly to take his Saints off the earth, while the second "Second Coming" would be visible to all humanity and would officially begin the millennial reign of Christ on earth (O'Leary 138).

Within the body of research that describes Jehovah's Witnesses, neither term has been specifically applied to the group; however, Witnesses believe that Jehovah is a God of purpose and that his purpose is unfolding as He intends. The Watchtower states, "God has a purpose for the earth, and that purpose is preordained" (15 Jan 2005: 5). Part of Jehovah's purpose culminates in an unavoidable battle between Christ and the antichrist. This unavoidable battle hearkens pre-millennial objectives since this battle is solely divine in nature and is unavoidable despite human

efforts to reform. Humans play a major role in Witness ideology, though, because they believe God's Word must reach as many as possible to allow for the opportunity that many may enter into the Truth and inherit an earthly paradise instead of facing annihilation during the apocalypse (WT 15 Dec 2006: 15).

Theological History of Apocalyptic Rhetoric Users

Though the Witnesses are not known as directly pre or post-millennial, their sect did derive from ideologies associated with orthodox Protestantism and its strong millenarian conviction (Brown 457). In fact, "the idea of an impending apocalypse pervaded early Reformation culture, beginning with Martin Luther's identification of the Pope as Antichrist. . ." (Stark 342). Such an apocalyptic focus influenced the era with a nearly universal belief in an imminent apocalypse (342). The apocalyptic language of the culture thus motivated norms that responded to and fostered an eschatological-based consciousness. This eschatological consciousness not only shaped the Protestant and Puritan beliefs of early America, divorcing them from Catholicism, but also it encouraged ". . .the chaotic proliferation of sect upon sect" (Bercovitch 10).

Early American religious group formation was a direct result of pervasive apocalyptic ideologies espoused by prevalent Puritan thinkers and authoritative religious figures. For instance, Increase Mather noted ". . . 'distressing Troubles and Confusions among the Nations'" and used these to symbolize that the Lord's Kingdom was near (Brown 446). Further, "[Reverend John] Cotton believed that the millennium would commence after the destruction of [the] Antichrist, which he equated with the Papacy" (Brown 445). The beliefs espoused by Mather and Cotton evidence the connection between identifying lived realities with divine symbols. This identification gives earthly events a supernatural purpose, justifying the Second Coming of Christ. In this way, their lived reality reinforces the Truth-value of the Second Coming and their belief altogether.

Second Adventism. A group that gained popularity due to its chronological focus on the Second Coming (or Second Advent) was the Millerites, who practiced what later was defined as either Millerism or Second Adventism. William Miller was a farmer who also became "one of the most significant figures to come out of [the] revivalist spirit of the Second Great Awakening. . . ." (White n.pag.). Miller

believed that the prophecies described in Daniel would occur at the time of Christ's Second Coming, which he began to call the Advent (hence the movement's tie to Adventism). He believed that the events of Revelation would transpire after Christ's Second Coming during the 1,000-year reign or millennium.

Miller's take on the Second Coming differed from other, more prophetic-based claims because Miller derived his understandings based on a careful system of date calculations; thus, he occupied more of an interpretive role vice a prophetic role (White n.pag.). Based on his initial calculations, he determined that Christ would arrive in 1843; however, after 1843 arrived without incident, he admitted an error in his calculations and set the Second Coming to arrive in 1844. When Christ failed to appear once again, the Millerites suffered what came to be known as the Great Disappointment of 1844 (White n.pag.).

Despite his lack of personal divine prophetic claims, Miller's prediction, and its assumed validity, originated from his and others' shared acceptance of the divine authority of Scripture and its prophecies. This shared acceptance fostered a shared social knowledge (O'Leary 132). High speed printing presses made mass communication

of this knowledge possible, expanding the movement's reach and membership (White n.pag.). As such, Miller and his followers could disseminate pamphlets and newsletters to a wide audience - not to persuade them intentionally, but to place the message before them for the audience to accept or reject (O'Leary 127). Consequently, much of the Millerite rhetoric inspired people to feel they were making their own choice to join the movement based on its use of the symbols of authority, such as divinity and scientific, objective calculations. In fact, a Millerite editor wrote in retrospect about the movement, "It seemed to us to have been so independent of human agency. . ." (Festinger et al. 22).

While the Great Disappointment of 1844 subdued much of the widespread and open proclamations about the Second Coming, much of the early American culture still possessed an overall belief in the Second Coming. Such a belief ". . . inspired revivalists, promoted conversions, and was itself fomented by evangelical fervor" and such a belief inspired many of the nineteenth century reform movements, the last of which ". . . was the society known as Jehovah's Witnesses [which] originated in 1872 by Charles Taze Russell of Pittsburgh" (Brown 451, 455). Russell authored a mass of

millennialist tracts and organized the Zion's Watch Tower Society in 1884 as a way to promote his teachings (Brown 455). Much of Russell's teachings focused on the:

. . .literal belief in the imminence of Christ's Kingdom, which [Jehovah's Witnesses] designate as the Theocracy. This reign began, they believe, with events taking place in heaven in 1914, but will not be complete until the forthcoming Battle of Armageddon, when Jehovah and Jesus Christ (understood as two separate individuals) will annihilate 'Satan's Organization,' in which are included the leaders of all the orthodox churches as well as political rulers. (Brown 456)

Clearly, the Witnesses (then referred to as "Bible Students") focused on both the Second Coming of Christ and the inevitable battle of Armageddon. Such focus derived from Millerism and Second Adventism and, consequently, places their group in an apocalyptic category.

While apocalyptic ideologies pervaded early Puritan and Protestant thought, and though failed prophecies led indelibly to the failure of Millerism in 1844, the discovery and use of atomic weapons also revived an American apocalyptic sensationalism because these

developments made real the possibility for humanity's extinction (O'Leary 141). Even Festinger et al., who studied a woman named Mrs. Keech and her apocalyptic group formation, acknowledges that apocalyptic ideology did not reside solely in Mrs. Keech's mind. Instead, "almost all of her conceptions of the universe, the spiritual world. . .and the dread possibilities of total atomic warfare can be found. . .in popular magazines, sensational books, and even columns of daily newspapers" (56). Atomic weaponry and certain historical events, such as World Wars, lead to the type of environment and thinking that makes the apocalypse a real possibility and, thus, a useful platform for advancing one's religious beliefs. The Witnesses advance their own beliefs using World War I and its associated date, 1914, as an indicator of Satan's release upon the earth. The October 1, 2005 Watchtower states, "World War I forced irreversible changes on human society and thrust mankind into the last days of this system of things" (5).

Implications of Current Apocalyptic Discourse

According to Andrew McMurry, current uses of the word "apocalypse" apply to "any global catastrophe, with the idea that out of the rubble emerges a new and better order. . ." (Par. 5). Both O'Leary and McMurry speak to a key

function of the apocalypse, which reveals and deals in the binaries of good and evil or order and disorder. The apocalypse provides a final revelation that culminates in the establishment of a future, permanent good or order for a presently evil or disordered society. According to Burke, ". . . 'identification' is. . . to confront the implications of division" (Rhetoric 1326). Division results when making a choice to identify with one side and not another. Connecting both absolute Truth and salvation from pain and suffering to one side provides impetus for choosing to side with it.

According to Wayne Meeks, apocalyptic discourse is defined as such because it contains three main characteristics: it is revelatory, interpretive, and dualistic (462). Both of the revelatory and interpretive components involve divinely inspired prophecies. Such prophecies require that some humans consubstantially identify with the divine by identifying themselves as divinely-inspired prophets. Prophecy may have multiple definitions; however, for the purposes of this study, Zygmunt and Cohn provide the following definition. Prophecy is "a collective prediction that a 'drastic transformation of the existing social order will occur in

the proximate future through the intervention of some supernatural agency'" [emphasis in original] (qtd. in Bader 127).

The mere prophecy that an apocalypse will occur can provide the required ". . .radical deconstruction [and] reconstruction that challenges, and sometimes demonizes, official interpretations of reality and offers an alternative vision of a social order" [emphasis in original] (Bromley 35). Apocalyptic groups require this prophetic promise of change to have something to offer group adherents.

Apocalyptic groups can develop into mass movements, especially mass movements all appeal to the same type of mind, which is the "frustrated mind" (Hoffer xi-xii). The frustrated mind links directly to the desire for an apocalypse because part of what ails the frustrated is the awareness of a blemished self from which one must escape (59). In fact, Western religious Truth perspectives contain the idea that the human self requires saving and will not be saved without God's grace.

Puritan literature manifests ideas about self-examination, which results in thinking of selfhood as something to overcome and obliterate, while identity

reforms through the submission to a transcendent absolute (Bercovitch 13). Not only does becoming one with a group affect the loss of the individual, but also it motivates the desire for a new life and a new order, which requires the destruction of the old order or old self; thus, the frustrated's "clamor for a millennium is shot through with a hatred for all that exists, and a craving for the end of the world" (98). While Witnesses may not comprise a broad, cultural mass movement, their numbers continue to grow with their current adherents numbering at around 7.3 million ("Annual Worldwide. . ." n.pag.).

Change motivates apocalyptic groups because they reject the current social order to and seek to identify with a newly formed order, which the group portrays as arriving imminently and inevitably (Bromley 33). Apocalyptic rhetoric functions between the liminal space of the old order and the desired new order. It both divides and identifies groups, while it also divides between good and evil (morality) and past and present (time). Through the use of such identifications and divisions, apocalyptic rhetoric forms groups because its features come to identify with certain group members' lived experiences.

The Features and Power of Apocalyptic Rhetoric

Apocalyptic Divisions and Identifications

Burke explains that there are terms that “. . .put things together, and terms that take things apart. Otherwise put, A can feel himself identified with B, or he can think of himself as disassociated from B” (Language 1344). Multiple levels of identification and division exist within notions of the apocalyptic prophecies. As noted earlier, the apocalypse distinguishes between the current, disordered social scene by offering a replacement for it with a future, ordered social scene. This fosters an ideal environment for one to join with groups that prophesy an escape from the disordered present with the promise of a future utopia.

Such an environment does not have to be religious; however, religious environments often engage in the use of prophecies and prophetic voice because future or transcendent projections often associate with the divine. John Yinger writes that “religion is the attempt to bring the relative, the temporary, the disappointing, the painful things in life into relation with what is conceived to be permanent, absolute, and cosmically optimistic” (5). As such, religious symbolism offers a way to identify societal

ills and project a possible future escape from them. Belief in the possibility for such a transformation requires an event that has the power to change it. To transcend the current order requires a division from it. The apocalypse provides for such a possible transformation and ultimate division because it identifies with divine characteristics. Its association with the Book of Revelation further reinforces the divine nature of the apocalypse.

In fact, "[religious] apocalyptic discourse. . .modulates the language of transcendence, for division between profane and sacred is our primary way of representing transcendence. . . ." (Meeks 463). Essentially, the present society is believed to be so destitute that only a divine intervention could help people transcend it. Word symbols allow for this transcendence because one can transcend an empirical, positive existence through abstract language. Meeks writes, "Apocalyptic discourse. . .lays claim to a form of knowledge not accessible to the ordinary ways of knowing. This is one of several ways apocalypse presents itself as a medium of transcendence" (462). The language of apocalyptic rhetoric enacts its own

transcendence by presenting a future state as a real possibility via divinely inspired cataclysmic language.

Since apocalyptic rhetoric enacts transcendence through divinely motivated cataclysmic language, it requires that a prophet communicate, reveal, and interpret such rhetoric. Not everyone can claim that they have a supernatural connection or are in some way divine. And while some may spread false prophecies, the prophetic claims, and the desire for them, exist nonetheless. Though one does not need to know something empirically to make it fact or Truth, identifying such Truth with the empirical reinforces its Truth-value; thus, when one sees war, famine, and pestilence occurring, one cannot deny their existence. Similarly, when prophecies address such problematic realities, the prophecies take on an empirical truth-value.

Further, when war, famine, and pestilence identify with evil, they take on supernatural characteristics and require a supernatural solution. When one applies Burke's dramatism to such events, one finds two dramas occurring with the added notion of evil - an empirical drama and a supernatural drama. In the empirical "apocalyptic" drama, humans function as agents (actors) within a cataclysmic

scene (the situation the actors act in) as they suffer tangibly; however, the supernatural drama consubstantially identifies with the empirical drama via the prophet and his or her prophecy, who acts as God's agency (or instrument) to deliver His message. The prophet/prophecy forms a link between the empirical reality and the supernatural purpose for that reality. The purpose for the apocalypse becomes the re-establishment of the original Edenic paradise.

To attain paradise requires one to side with good and reject evil. In fact, Burke argues that "The 'dramatistic' approach puts the primary stress upon such horatory expressions as 'thou shalt, or thou shalt not'" [emphasis in original] (Language 1340). As a result, morality inevitably ties to the drama apocalyptic rhetoric describes. Choosing to identify with the good side or evil side becomes a possible and pressing choice to make.

Evil and Moral Choice

Apocalyptic rhetoric addresses the principles of good and evil, which comprise the lives of even non-religious human beings. That humanity experiences good and evil acts and that human language contains symbols that represent good and evil invites the persuasion of apocalyptic rhetoric, even if not in a religious sense. O'Leary

suggests that much of the evil that apocalyptic rhetoric responds to comprises:

. . .the litany of the jeremiad: drug abuse and divorce are rampant; homosexuality is shamelessly public, Satanism, occultism, Communism, and a host of other 'isms' [are] identified as demonic. . .war and ecological disaster seem inescapable.
(83)

In this way, apocalyptic rhetoric focuses more on experiences of perceived evil and devastation rather than experiences of good; however, both are required symbol categories for one to make moral choices.

Since apocalyptic language embodies the moral principles and symbols tied to good and evil, it becomes a highly religious discourse because:

apocalyptic revelations are particularly likely to enunciate unitary, overarching principles as a response to the compromise and corruption within the social order that has precipitated the current [and ongoing] crisis. These principles are used as emblems of the purity of the apocalyptic group and thematize its organization.
(Bromley 38)

Apocalyptic revelations present ideas of corruption as measured against the idea of, and possibility for, the non-corrupt state. If corruption exists as a present disorder, establishing future order becomes the logical response.

Ideas of corrupt and non-corrupt states find a home in religious ideology because this type of ideology uses a language that addresses and attacks evil and the need to build a better society. According to Williams and Alexander, "such a language cannot be neutral - it shapes the movement as the movement attempts to shape the society" (3). The shaping of society results in its socialization. Burke writes that socialization is a "moralizing process" and that the main ingredient to socialization is rhetoric (Rhetoric 1336). Burke's emphasis on the relationship between rhetoric and socialization seems logical since a group's characteristics and interests are reflected in the group's language.

Further, Warner emphasizes that a relationship exists between the language of a group and its characteristics, writing that "the community is in varying degrees both determined by [its] texts and determinative of them" and that groups will use texts, like the Bible, to inform their faith, while also using their faith to accept the Bible as

God's Word (15). The language of the group and its texts shares a consubstantial relationship. This relationship reflects the group's principles while simultaneously enacting them.

When groups use language to define moral behaviors and expected norms, identity formation and maintenance occurs because the language of a group reflects the principles of its identity. The language of a group enables the communication of group-specific beliefs and forms certain roles and identities. Wimberley suggests that when religious groups develop expectations of their members and simultaneously performs such expectations, a reinforcement of one's group identity ensues through role performance. Role performance, Wimberley writes, is ". . . a key concept in identity theory. . . ." (129). Samarin takes this concept into the symbolic realm, writing that ". . . the ability to behave in an appropriate manner can be used to symbolize what it means to be an adherent of a given religious community and to regulate behavior within it" (11). In this sense, the language becomes inherently moral because "appropriate" must be defined by what is "not appropriate." As a result, both the language of the group and the behaviors of the group become symbolic representations of

the group. Such symbolic representations further divide groups from other groups that do not share the same language or behavioral norms, which are reinforced via conceptions of morality.

Witnesses make use of role performance and group-specific language most poignantly in their group name. This name was chosen to not only describe them, but to constantly remind them of their role: to be a witness of Jehovah and to witness his holy purpose. Using their understanding of God's "personal" name within their group name works to separate them from other Christian denominations, while also giving them a consubstantial identification with God through the use of his most personal name. In fact, according to The Watchtower:

If you come from a good family, you probably are proud to bear your father's name. So are those who bear Jehovah's name today. A great international, worldwide family proudly bear the heavenly Father's name as Jehovah's Witnesses. (1 Feb 1980: 15)

One can see a symbolic relationship between Jehovah and His witnesses just in the group's name. Certainly, during apocalyptic times, Jehovah will recognize those who are His

witnesses above any other group. This name gives Jehovah's Witnesses a rhetorical advantage over those who do not use it as a part of their identity construction.

Another aspect of the morality factor in apocalyptic rhetoric centers itself on the use of "morally sufficient reason." In fact, O'Leary argues that explanations for evil must reconcile belief and experience to justify an individual's suffering. Adequate justification can only be attained through rhetorical means since defining the problem of evil ". . . involves value judgments that cannot be proved, but can only be argued rhetorically" (36). Again, evil exists symbolically in language. One can feel he or she is evil or feel evil as an external attack; however, feelings are not considered objective.

The belief in the apocalypse works to reconcile the belief and experience of evil by providing a solution or a justification. Each component supports the truth-value of the other: evil is real (I feel it, see it in myself or others, and can contemplate its existence because language exists to contemplate it with); thus, the belief in evil and its opposite, good, must be warranted. Consequently, since the apocalypse provides an answer to the problem of evil, it, too, must be an actual possibility.

The language of an apocalyptic group not only describes the concepts of good and evil, but also it works to form the type of group that will be fit (both in strength and in deserving) to survive divine cataclysm. Solidarity is required to maintain the strength of such a group. Lukewarm positions weaken the strength obtained through solidarity; therefore, the language used to form and maintain a group must create an environment conducive to making firm choices. Such choices tie back to the motivation for living the "good life" as described by Burke, who believes that ". . .fundamentally all men appear to want to act in such a way (ethical choice) that they achieve Good (the end) in the drama of living" (Holland 36).

While Burke does not speak specifically about religious conduct, his ideology connects to O'Leary's observation that the language of Revelation cannot be confused in terms of what it presents as being tied to good (the Lamb and the Bride of Christ) and evil (the beast and the Great Whore). O'Leary argues that "such an absolute separation between good and evil in the cosmic drama directs the plot to the ultimate dialectic of victimage" (71). Such victimage speaks to the influence that

apocalyptic groups believe evil has over their lived experience. Members of these groups are subject to evil influence and attack; thus, the group functions to provide refuge from evil attacks as well as justified explanations for such attacks (they are a part of God's plan and will be dealt with during the apocalypse).

Since a religious apocalypse offers a solution to the overarching problem of evil on a cosmic level, it also comes to identify with a solution to the problem of evil within the individual; thus, the problem of evil must be highlighted within the individual. Hoffer suggests that ". . .the technique of a mass movement aims to infect people with a malady and then offer the movement as a cure" and that:

an effective mass movement cultivates the idea of sin. It depicts the autonomous self not only as barren and helpless but also as vile. To confess and repent is to slough off one's distinctness and separateness, and salvation is found by losing oneself in the holy oneness of the congregation [emphasis added]. (54)

The desire to lose oneself gains further impetus when humans debase their humanity by thinking of it as unworthy

of the divine. A religious group that espouses and reinforces divine ideals becomes the ideal entity into which one may lose his or her individual, base self.

As Burke argues, this losing of the self represents the ultimate sacrificial principle, which “. . . is intrinsic to the idea of Order” (Religion 4). Order requires sacrifice. One must sacrifice his or her sinful desires to avoid discord and prevent continued disorder; however, Burke explains that “Order leads to Guilt / (for who can keep commandments!) / Guilt needs Redemption/ (for who would not be cleansed!) / Redemption needs a Redeemer. . .” (Religion 4-5). If a group offers salvation and paradise (Order), but knows it offers such to flawed and imperfect humans, a cycle gets established whereby members learn of their sinful nature and are indoctrinated with certain moral mandates to help avoid sin. Inevitably, group members sin by failing at the idealistic moral mandates and then must look to the group for further guidance and redemption. Religious groups achieve their role as Redeemer by identifying with God’s Truth and operating accordingly.

Burke's trajectory of Guilt → Order → Redemption → Redeemer ties directly to the function of Hoffer's group-inspired malady. When a religious group refers to the idea of sin, it speaks to the sinful nature that it identifies within group members, especially when they were not once part of the group. The group then offers group membership and guidance as a solution to sin via promised salvation - as long as one makes the sacrifices necessary to join and stay with the group. Refusing to join a religious group and accept its Truth means one must remain in a sinful (individual) state thus vulnerable to a multitude of consequences, whether these include physical or emotional pain or the idea of permanent annihilation during the apocalypse.

Contending with the evil that lies within the individual also works to vindicate the actions of those who make the required choices (or sacrifices) to follow God's course (or Burke's Good Life). According to Meeks, if people ". . . stay the course, God will reward their righteousness over and against the hostile world" (472). This idea of a reward further motivates individuals to make the kinds of choices that lead to the promise of survival,

especially when faced with the seeming reality of the apocalypse.

In this way, the apocalypse becomes further identified with a real solution to sin. If one perceives their sinfulness as real, the solution to such sin also gains empirical value. As a result, the morality tied to the apocalypse serves a dual function: to vindicate the righteous choices and to serve as a warning against evil or wrong choices. Such choice reinforces the norms of any group role because negative sanctions will result upon norm violation. Wimberley writes "Religious group members anticipate some type of [negative] sanctions by other group members, and/or the deity, if they violate religious norms" (130).

A focus on the individual and his or her sin also creates a powerful cycle where one's real feelings of guilt can be manufactured by the language of a group that describes the source of it (evil and sin) while simultaneously offering a solution to it. In this case, the texts of an apocalyptic group, such as The Watchtower offered by the Witnesses, both describes the evil and sin experienced by individuals and provides a solution to that problem (join and stick with the group to be saved). In

fact, the Puritans relied on Scriptures as the safest way to monitor the conscience because they were viewed as divine, thus, infallible (Bercovitch 30).

The presentation of evil and sin within the text of apocalyptic groups, either in the Bible or in associated texts, casts evil and sin into a dramatic battle with good. Each force gains an identity (God and Satan) and each must battle to overtake the other. When such dramatization occurs in the presentation of forming order out of chaos, the presentation inevitably becomes an "ethically charged conflict." Such a conflict must resolve, then, with the elimination of the disruption in the name of something "good" (Carter "Kenneth Burke" 363).

Such a dramatization creates the following cycle where order begets the need for morality so that societies can function cooperatively to live the Good Life. Ideas about morality, however, beget division between good and evil and among groups who have differing ideas about what constitutes good and evil. This division then begets further chaos and, ultimately, the desire to return to order. Consequently, the apocalypse, and rhetoric that contains apocalyptic notions, embodies this trajectory of

order→disorder→order and becomes a renewing self-fulfilling prophecy - always relevant and applicable to an individual's lived experience.

Time and Objectivity

Like evil, time also represents another aspect of life that humans experience. Humans experience the passing of time and contextualize their lives in terms of time. In fact, both ". . .time and evil appear in eschatological discourse as statements about the universe that are assumed to be true. . .and provide warrant for rhetorical arguments" (O'Leary 31). When apocalyptic rhetoric speaks to and is motivated out of the prevalence of evil in the world, "it is often claimed that the present is the time of greatest evil. . ." [emphasis in original] (Robbins and Palmer 7). The present time provides a direct referent to the personal and direct experience of evil, which casts the roles of either the evil-doer or the sufferer in need of salvation in the apocalyptic narrative. Evil and time are both primary components of the apocalyptic narrative.

In fact, "Apocalyptic discourse is about time; it places the rhetor and the audience (and by extension, the whole human community) into a context of cosmic time where

the judgment (krisis) of history is revealed as imminent" (O'Leary 16). Though O'Leary casts the rhetor and the audience as separate roles played in the apocalyptic rhetoric exchange, with a Burkean understanding, the rhetor and the audience can exist as one in the same (as in the "I addressing its me"). While the Watchtower Society prints tracts that constantly refer to past, present, and future states of the world (here, The Watchtower operates as an external rhetor of apocalyptic ideas), the individual Witness uses his or her own time and his or her own experience of the present as evidence for an unfolding prophecy.

Moreover, since the individual Witness belongs to a group who experiences and interprets time in similar ways, time, in this sense, becomes a symbol that helps the members of the group consubstantially identify with each other and with the prophecy they see unfolding (they become participants). Though all humans experience time, not all humans interpret it the same way and for the same purpose (i.e. not all humans are Jehovah's Witnesses, but a good number are either Witnesses or belong to some other apocalyptically-based sect).

O'Leary's observation that apocalyptic rhetoric is about time is essential. This assertion ties to Burke's notion of the "temporizing of essence," where something's essence is ". . .conveyed in temporal, or 'storial' terms" ("The Temporizing" 619). These temporal or storial terms refer to beginnings, middles, and ends. Burke argues that each stage of time must contain the others "in anticipation (as regards a beginning), in retrospect (as regards an end), while the middle would somehow contain the 'substance' of both" (qtd. in Lindsay 10). While time divides into past, present, and future, time operates symbolically with its ability to contain all three in one moment. Apocalyptic rhetoric depends on this possibility. Past events (either documented in the Bible or in an individual's experience) form and maintain present attitudes.

Further, past events documented in textual form can be brought back to life continually in the present upon each reference. This exemplifies a couple ways that the past can exist within the present. Additionally:

an historical awareness. . .imparts a sense of continuity. Possessed of a vivid vision of past and future, the true believer sees himself part

of something that stretches endlessly backward
and forward - something eternal. (Hoffer 72)

Apocalyptic rhetoric also uses the past as a referent to vindicate the truth-value of its prophecies about the future. It will reference fulfilled prophecies of the past (i.e. the fall of Jerusalem, as predicted in Ezekiel, is assumed an actual event because the Bible contains it and different Biblical accounts include it in cross references) to justify the possibility for prophetic fulfillments set to occur. Apocalyptic rhetoric makes use of "the prophetic mode," which "evaluates the present in terms of the pre-ordained future. Apocalypticism is distinguished by the greater imminence of the future. . ." (Robbins and Palmer 8).

Time also allows for the possibility of change. Change occurs as a process. Burke argues that acts of communication strive for perfection in ideal cooperation; therefore, if communication lacks perfection, a change towards perfection must occur. Burke's ideas about striving for perfection and the perfect state apocalyptic rhetoric promises in its culmination form a relationship. Burke argues that "if beginning, middle, and end all

contain each other 'implicitly,' the temporizing of essence is a thoroughly entelechial concept" (qtd. in Lindsay 10).

Entelechy is an Aristotelian notion (entelecheia) regarding the biological realm, but Burke extends it to the symbolic realm, interpreting it as a thing's striving to be its once or previously perfect nature (Lindsay 8-10). For Burke, this perfect nature represents ideal cooperation via ideal communication. Entelechy speaks to the inherent principle of perfection that directs something to change towards the accomplishment of its final goal (Lindsay 10). In religious contexts, one strives to revert to a time before the sordid human state induced by original sin. Ironically, only the future culmination of the apocalypse makes this reversion possible.

Symbolic entelechy relates to the principle of time because it requires an origin and a desired destination (past and future). In this sense, apocalyptic rhetoric succeeds or fails with audiences based on how it symbolically constructs time as a change agent. When one accepts apocalyptic premises, one believes in the existence of an imperfect origin and perfection becomes a desired destination. Put in terms of Christianity, "the cosmogenic

narrative of Genesis thus implies the eschatological resolution of Revelation" (O'Leary 28).

For Witnesses, these actions include spending a majority of their time reading their Bible and group authored texts, which constantly reinforce apocalyptic notions about the past, present, and future. They also must try to devote as many hours as possible "pioneering" door to door to recruit fellow believers so that everyone has an opportunity to attain some sort of perfect future state. Pioneering hours get recorded and published every year in the January edition of The Watchtower for the group to see. Seeing increasing numbers of group adherents implies that the method and message work and reinforces the notion that this group follows the right path of action.

Since Witness rhetoric focuses on time, many of the group's actions are time focused. According to Bromley, for users of and responders to apocalyptic rhetoric, "the focus of activity [action] becomes attending to revelations concerning the timing of the apocalypse, preparing for the end time events, and reorienting expectations and organization toward the world that is to come" (37). This seems a logical way to describe the actions apocalyptic rhetoric motivates since one's terminology compels specific

types of action (Lindsay 10). My analysis of Witness texts will demonstrate how time fills their doctrine and motivates their everyday lives.

Urgency and Objectivity

Another aspect to time in apocalyptic rhetoric pertains to its speed. Urgency develops out of the belief in Christ's return. Witnesses make use of urgency in much of their literature. Initially, Witness predictions were assigned a specific timeframe. As time moved closer to the specified date, urgency set in and worked to motivate even more radical actions (i.e. some Jehovah's Witnesses refused (and still refuse) to get married, have children, pursue career opportunities, or to remain employed). Witnesses do not perceive that they are missing out on anything if the Second Coming is viewed as urgently imminent. Further, they are well prepared to leave the evil state in which they believe they live and desire for this to happen quickly.

Another benefit to establishing specific dates is to imbue prophecies with an objective quality. Specific dates arise out of careful calculation based on Biblical time references. As a result, "apocalyptic chronology becomes a calculative logic in which numbers carry a symbolic force"

(120). Numbers possess a concrete, objective, and scientific nature. Numbers allow for the quantification of time. As such, emphasis on dates lends a certain weight to interpretations and prophecies. Further, scientific explanations are often viewed as authoritative in a secular sense; thus, presenting information as divine imbues it with sacred authority, while presenting divine information objectively with numbers imbues it with a both a sacred and secular authority.

Rather than presenting itself as emotional and irrational, much apocalyptic rhetoric is presented in terms of numeric and scientific calculation, which a temporal focus helps to affect. O'Leary writes that:

. . .a brief survey of the history of apocalyptic interpretation shows that its long tradition of scriptural exegesis and chronological calculation includes such figures of the Enlightenment as Joseph Priestly and Isaac Newton, and that such discourse often exhibits intense concern with the appearance of rationality and a tendency to build tightly constructed sequences of 'logical' argument. (15)

O'Leary notes the how prevalent time charts are within apocalyptic literature. Such charts assist with ". . . deducing the age of the world and the date of its End through complex feats of addition, subtraction, and multiplication" (80). Figure 1 provides a sample image that illustrates such a chart in Witness literature:

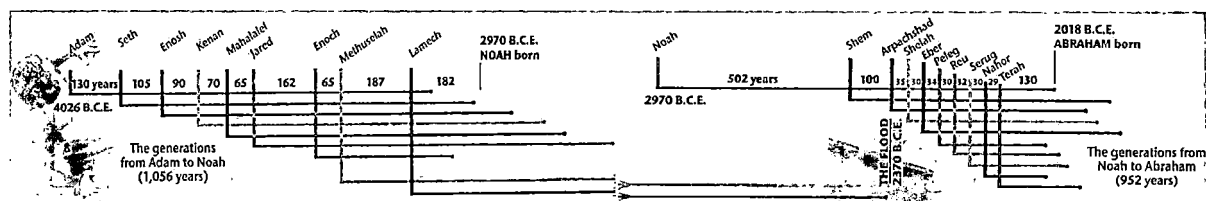


Figure 1. A Record of Names and Dates.

Source: The Watchtower. Brooklyn: The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1 Oct. 2005. 8-9.

While the Witnesses continue to use time charts and numeric calculations, they have stopped establishing specific dates. Despite this doctrinal shift, their apocalyptic rhetoric remains imbued with urgency. According to Robbins and Palmer, "the 'last days' are. . . experienced as psychologically (if not always chronologically) imminent" (5). Urgency remains a key way to intensify apocalyptic rhetoric because it still presents itself as imminent. Biblical sources foster a belief in

this possibility, especially in Matthew 24, a frequently quoted Bible chapter in Witness rhetoric, which emphasizes not knowing the day or hour of the Second Coming.

For instance, Matthew 24:36 reads, "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father" (NWT). Matthew 24:42 reads, "Keep on the watch, therefore, because YOU do not know on what day YOUR Lord is coming." Almost identically, Matthew 25:13 reads, "Keep on the watch, therefore, because YOU know neither the day nor the hour." Each verse has a cross-reference elsewhere in the Bible, multiplying the message of each exponentially. When Witness texts repeatedly refer to these verses, the message gets further embedded.

This indeterminate imminence develops greater influence because the Second Coming could arrive at almost any moment. This possibility motivates apocalyptic groups, such as the Witnesses, to constantly live in a state of readiness. Such a state determines daily activities, with each becoming an ethical choice to make (i.e. shall I watch TV or should I proselytize, study the Bible, and read The Watchtower?).

The Apocalyptic Narrative and its Empty Metaphor

One of the most powerful rhetorical devices present in apocalyptic rhetoric resides in its ability to identify with one's lived experience. Not only does apocalyptic rhetoric identify certain verifiable tragedies of human life (war, famine, pestilence), but also it unfolds in the same way that human life unfolds - in a narrative fashion comprising a beginning, middle, and end (these relate also to notions of time). This narrative construction relates to the Burkean notion of drama, where humans are actors in the production of the story (or narrative) of life.

All humans have a story to tell and to enact. Apocalyptic dramas, or stories, allow for what Tom Thatcher calls "the empty metaphor." Thatcher derives his understanding of the empty metaphor from the linguistic theory of I.A. Richards who ". . .discusses referentiality in terms of the 'semantic triangle,' a semiotic map that relates symbols. . .thoughts, and things" (550-1). Richards focuses on the idea that linguistic symbols derive meaning from one's own worldview (Thatcher 551). Richards' theory and Thatcher's understanding of it tie to Burkean notions of how symbols develop meaning for symbol users. While Thatcher and Richards both argue that socio-political

conditions produce forms of discourse, Burke argues that the discourse and the conditions the discourse describes come to consubstantially identify, each begetting the other.

The apocalyptic story (drama) applies to everyone since everyone experiences evil, time, and the human condition (all humans must face death). Apocalyptic narratives, therefore, allow for the insertion of anyone into their frame. In this sense, apocalyptic narratives become templates available to insert one's self and the events of one's life. When the template fills, the empty metaphor no longer remains empty. This apocalyptic template allows for human beings to not only exist as believers of such apocalyptic events, but also to play a personal role in the cosmic drama.

Burke's pentad also constitutes an empty metaphor because each part requires that the actor fill it with his or her experiences. O'Leary supports this assertion explaining that narrative accounts for the origin and destiny of the universe and functions as a symbol system comprised of ". . . acts, agencies, and agents (divine, diabolical, and human) that establish the cosmic 'scene' and that will ultimately bring it to its conclusion" (25).

Role-filling allows for a feeling of participation or control in the situation. When Witnesses become agents of Jehovah to communicate his Truth, they take on a role in Jehovah's cosmic drama, even contributing to its outcome.

Thatcher goes on to explain that apocalyptic discourse engages a reader to "self-textualize" himself or herself as a participant in a salvation history, where ". . .the audience [or the self in a Burkean expansion of the audience concept], caught between the past and the end of time, is asked to textualize [his or] her own world to fill this gap" (550, 554). Bercovitch explains that this textualization occurred with the Puritans, writing that there was a "synchronizing of author, reader, and scripture" among them (31). The text determined the form and function of the Puritan group just as the Puritans' faith determined their belief about the divinity inherent in their religious texts. The Puritans developed a consubstantial relationship between themselves and their texts - each symbolizing the principles of, and becoming, the other.

Just as apocalyptic rhetoric functions in the liminal space between the old order and the upcoming new order, so too does the individual (or group) come to occupy that

space between the past and the future of the narrative of life. Most importantly, when the individual or group is:

placed in the narrative of God's mighty deeds, the audience is encouraged to act, to either change the world or to endure it a short time longer. The power of apocalyptic lies in this power to textualize and centralize every reader, to make every person who heeds its call to action the object of blessing. (Thatcher 567)

Such a call to action ties to Burke's call to action as a response to symbolic motive. The apocalyptic stage involves evil symbols. An apocalyptic group forms to respond to the symbolic experience of evil. This group formation reinforces the belief in a divine apocalypse, while also engaging the group to play a favoured role on the divine stage. Such a role is played both for the self-as-audience (as the self perceives its own depraved situation) and for God as an audience so that He may bestow reward upon His actors.

Part of the required call to action, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, is to announce and continually reiterate the message of the impending apocalypse. O'Leary explains "Apocalypse is the Truth unveiled; I unveil it

with my telling of it. If you believe me, that is a sign of the End. If you do not believe me, that too is a sign of the End" (88). When one believes in the Truth of the apocalyptic message, one develops a consubstantial foundation and thus aligns with the messenger. This alignment reinforces each member's faith or understanding about the apocalypse and its divine implications.

A rejection of the apocalyptic message is expected and the apocalyptic frame calls for the rejection of its message. According to O'Leary, the mythic narrative presents the idea that that most of humanity will ultimately turn away from its Truth and worship the demonic beast; this idea creates an expectation in the mind of the believer and provides further evidence for the truth-value of the apocalyptic message as it enacts itself in such rejections (88). Such rejections function, again, as a reinforcement of prophecy fulfillment based on real experience since they are built into the prophecy. Further, this aspect reinforces identifications and divisions between those chosen and those rejected.

Many academic researchers highlight the presence of the empty metaphor concept in apocalyptic stories and prophecies when discussing the powerful features of

apocalyptic rhetoric. For instance, Philip Lamy writes that "The power of the millennial myth rests in its protean adaptation to change and its ability to mirror the experiences of many different groups. . ." [emphasis added] (114). Robbins and Palmer further quote Lamy, writing that "the millennial myth. . .is like a floating framework for explaining the 'big picture' for both religious and secular millenarian movements" (13). Additionally, Michael Cuneo writes that "the malleability of prophetic utterances [and] their ready adaptability to present circumstances is precisely what gives them value" (177). Finally, Joseph Zygmunt explains that apocalyptic discourse frequently relies on a combination of historical events and a group's pessimistic worldview to create an overall hyperawareness to societal or natural disasters as evidence for the future collapse of earthly systems (935).

Each of the above views emphasizes how apocalyptic rhetoric functions by leaving itself open to personal and situational interpretation (identification). Since apocalyptic rhetoric allows for these varied interpretations, which all ultimately conclude in a radical global or universal reformative change, it can be molded and re-molded to fit any situation, as required. Such

applicability and shaping allows apocalyptic rhetoric to have a sort of eternal influence. Such re-casting of prophecies based on changes in scene and how re-casting keeps apocalyptic rhetoric eternally relevant will be further explored in Chapter 5.

While the empty metaphor concept is not the only feature that characterizes apocalyptic rhetoric, its noted prevalence among academics emphasizes its contribution to making apocalyptic rhetoric powerful. Further, the empty metaphor directly ties to Burke's rhetoric of identification because it allows for audiences to consubstantially identify their experience with the experiences it describes; thus, apocalyptic rhetoric could be categorized as a form of identification rhetoric.

Fear or Hope?

A relationship exists between the real experience of evil and the desire for it to end via a divine solution. It is inspiring and helpful for one to believe that evil will end and that such an end will arrive soon. According to Hoffer, "No faith is potent unless it is also faith in the future; unless it has a millennial component" (9). Such a promise of future salvation offers a necessary and motivating hope.

One may be inclined to think that apocalyptic rhetoric derives its power from fear. Though fear plays a role in apocalyptic rhetoric, especially with a God-fearing audience, users of apocalyptic rhetoric do not focus on fear to influence audiences. Rather, for apocalyptic rhetoric to maintain power, it must inspire feelings of hope. Thatcher writes that “. . .apocalyptic rhetoric creates an alternate view of reality that allows the reader to experience relief and hope in the face of social chaos” (549). Hoffer adds that “a rising mass movement preaches the immediate hope. It is intent on stirring its followers to action, and it is the around-the-corner brand of hope that prompts people to act” (30). This hope helps one make the sacrifices necessary to usher in the new millennium. Hope makes the sacrifices seem worthwhile.

Making sacrifices may appear to non-believers as unnecessary and unwarranted. Surely no one should have to sacrifice so much; yet, the hope becomes all one wants out of life. By comparison, the present cannot offer the hope that the future can. Such a future-based mindset can symbolically replace one's present-based mindset. Holland explains:

He [who] can identify himself with a hypothetical man of tomorrow who lives in an era of peace and comfort, although paradoxically he is not the man of tomorrow but the man of today who has neither peace nor comfort, [but] he feels con-substantial and identified with such a man since he yearns for and is motivated by the peace which our imaginary man hypothetically. . .has [emphasis in original]. (33)

Chapter 4 will explore how the Witnesses foster negative feelings about the present to reinforce feelings of hope and the desire to identify with "the (hu)man of tomorrow," as one looks to the future (and past) to find evidence of Jehovah's power and victory over evil.

St. John's Revelation depicts awesome, terrifying, and vivid images of the Antichrist and associated evils. Such imagery and symbolism invites feelings of anxiety, sadness, and fear; however, Revelation concludes with messages of hope and happiness for those who observe the words of the prophecy as Rev. 22:7 states "And look! I am coming quickly. Happy is anyone observing the words of the prophecy of this scroll" (NWT). An October 1, 1950 Watchtower tract expresses this sentiment:

Not forever. . .will the Creator allow present distress and wickedness to continue on the earth. He has foreordained a definite time to bring the last vestiges of Satan's world to a violent end; and the remaining time is very short. (LXXI)

CHAPTER THREE

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS BELIEFS AND SYMBOLS AND
THEIR TIE TO IDENTIFICATION RHETORIC

The Witness Foundation

This chapter provides information and analysis on Witness beliefs and symbols, in general, without addressing those beliefs and symbols tied specifically to the apocalypse. Providing general beliefs will help the reader to understand the Witnesses as a group and will provide a foundation for understanding their apocalyptic identity. As this chapter explains primary Witness beliefs, it will explore how they fit into the realm of identification rhetoric. Since apocalyptic rhetoric represents a form of identification rhetoric, some discussion of apocalyptic rhetoric will appear in this chapter, with a more extensive Burkean analysis of Witness apocalyptic rhetoric appearing in Chapter 4.

According to ex-Witnesses Gary and Barbara Botting, "The concept of the imminent End of the World is central to the assumptions and activities of Witnesses, who believe that most major Bible prophecies are being fulfilled in the

twentieth century" (3). The twentieth and twenty-first centuries are referred to in the distinct lexicon of the Witnesses as the "present system of things." For instance, the March 1, 2002 Watchtower explains that ". . .the end of this present system of things [is] 'a day of fury, a day of distress and of anguish, a day of storm and of desolation, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick gloom.' (Zephaniah 1:15)" (31). Clearly, the Witnesses focus on the end of the world, or the end of this "present system of things." This focus establishes them as an apocalyptic group. (The use of the term "system" will receive further discussion on order and hierarchy later in the chapter.)

The Witnesses proclaim that, in 1914, Jehovah established his heavenly kingdom with the ousting of Satan upon the earth. Within "a generation" of 1914, Jehovah will extend this kingdom to Earth; however, Jehovah must first purge the earth of all in opposition to his kingdom. Those considered "in opposition" include entire nations of people who place their faith in human governments and/or in any belief other than that of the Witnesses (Botting and Botting xxxi). This fundamental belief establishes the requirement for identification and division at the outset.

Two classes of people are prophesied to survive such a purging. The first class consists of 144,000 members as specified in Revelation 7:4 and 14:1 of the NWT. This class of people also shares the following labels: "Anointed Remnant," "The Faithful and Discreet Slave Class," "Little Flock," and "Bride of Christ." The 144,000 are destined to inherit the heavenly kingdom jointly with Christ (Botting and Botting 187). The 144,000 is comprised of ". . .the apostles and many of the disciples of Christ's day, and other faithful Christians who became 'Jehovah's Witnesses' prior to 1935" (Botting and Botting xxxii). The 144,000 also consists of all fourteen members of the Governing Body of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, who preside, nameless, over all the Witnesses and who furnish all literature that the Witnesses read and proselytize (Botting and Botting 15-6).

The other class of people is referred to as the "Great Crowd" or "Other Sheep." This class consists of Witnesses who adopted the faith after 1935 and represents a group of people destined for an earthly paradise rather than the heavenly kingdom (Botting and Botting xxxii, 189).

The January 1, 1975 edition of The Watchtower explains the class distinction via Scriptural reference in the following text:

The Scriptures show that those who would be joint heirs with Christ in his kingdom and who would rule with him for a thousand years would be 144,000 in number, and that on earth there would be an unnumbered 'great crowd' that would prove themselves loyal subjects of that kingdom. - Rev. 7:4-10; 14:3-5; 20:6. (21)

(The heavy use of scriptural reference within The Watchtower will be analyzed later in this chapter.)

These classes do not exempt members from death. If one's death should occur before the arrival of the apocalypse, members in either class will be resurrected to enjoy their heavenly or earthly hope (WT 1 Feb 1975: 79). That two separate classes exist, even following the apocalypse, introduces the idea of a hierarchical structure and establishes an internal division within the Witnesses. Their structure and divisions tie to Burke's theories on the role of symbols of authority and hierarchy, which Burke argues are inherent in human symbol systems. Burke's

theories on symbols of authority and hierarchy will be discussed later in the chapter.

The Personal Name of God: Jehovah

A prominent hierarchical symbol tied to Witnesses and their beliefs is their use of the name, Jehovah. Originally, the Witnesses were known as "Bible Students"; however, in 1931, Judge Joseph Rutherford, then president of the Watchtower Tract and Bible Society, re-named the group "Jehovah's Witnesses" based on the prophecy of Isaiah, which, in part, states:

We are servants of Jehovah God commissioned to do a work in his name, and, in obedience to his commandment, to deliver the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to make known to the people that Jehovah is the true and Almighty God; therefore we joyfully embrace and take the name which the mouth of the Lord God has named, and we desire to be known as and called by the name, to writ, Jehovah's Witnesses. (Isaiah 43:10). (WT 15 Feb 2006: 27)

Upon taking this name, the Jehovah's Witnesses inextricably tied themselves to Jehovah (God) and consubstantially

identified with him. Anytime one hears this divine name, the Witnesses are conjured and connected immediately. Symbolically, they become a unified entity.

As a result, the Witnesses become earthly manifestations of Jehovah, which relates to the popular Christian adage that God made man in his image (WT 1 Jan 1975:17). The Witnesses recognize this relationship in their literature, writing:

The message that we bear emanates from Jehovah, who is the very epitome of dignity and holiness. (Isaiah 6:3) The Bible urges us to imitate him "as beloved children." (Ephesians 5:1) Our dress and grooming can reflect either well or badly on our heavenly Father. Surely we want to make his heart glad! - Proverbs 27:11. (WT 1 Aug 2002: 19)

In this sense, the Witnesses become the physical manifestation of Jehovah, while their use of his name also helps to make him "real" to them. The Watchtower explains that "Knowing God's name is critical to coming to know him as a person. (Exodus 34:6, 7)" (15 Oct 1999: 30). Names establish a concrete identity, giving the abstract notion of "God" a more personal and accessible touch.

While Witnesses attempt to symbolize Jehovah in their appearance, their use of his name in their group name ties them to the divine features of his divine identity. Burke emphasizes the importance of such a title, writing that there is a ". . .linguistic drive towards a Title of Titles, a logic of entitlement that is completed by thus rising to ever and ever higher orders of generalization" which could be ". . .equated with a movement toward the Divine. . . ." (Religion 25). A divine name expedites the move towards the divine because it is inherently (symbolically) divine.

Adopting the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" elevates the group's status by giving the group a divine association and an exclusionary status, which divides them from other groups. The Watchtower even states that this group name has "served to make known world wide the unique name of the one true God. And secondly, it has set apart the real followers of Jesus Christ. . .from all others who profess to be Christians but are such in name only" (WT 1 Feb 1975:84). Further, they argue that "The true Christian congregation, according to the Bible, would be 'a people for [God's] name.' (Acts 15:14) They would obviously use the name of God. . .in their worship" (WT 1 Jun 1975: 325).

The Witnesses highlight a key component in their differentiation between the term "Christianity" and the name "Jehovah." One term possesses a direct tie to "Christ," yet the Witnesses do not believe Christ and God are equal. Instead, according to the Witnesses, God created Jesus, and as such, cannot share in creation as a co-Creator (Botting and Botting 9); therefore, they make reference to their being "truly" Christian, but their official group name binds them to the higher power (Jehovah) (as they perceive it).

The Witnesses not only embody Jehovah in their identity via the use of his name in their group name, but also they embody Jehovah in their group behaviors. The name, "Jehovah," and its associated meanings, directs the language of the group, which, in turn, directs its behavior. This language/behavior relationship is central to Burke's theory on humans being the symbol-using/symbol-responding animal. The Watchtower shows how Witnesses perceive their group name to affect the group's behavior with the following passage, "How clearly that new name defined the primary activity of all those bearing that name!" [emphasis added] (WT 15 Feb 2006:27). The name "Jehovah" possesses various meanings. This name

establishes God as a "God of purpose." Purpose is implicit in the name since, according to The Watchtower, "Jehovah means 'He Causes to Become.' With progressive action, Jehovah causes himself to be the Fulfiller of all his promises" (15 Aug 1999: 14). Additionally, Botting and Botting write that Bible scholars generally accept that the verb "to be" provides the source for the name "Jehovah" (xxxi). Burke argues that symbols induce action. In this case, the name symbol "Jehovah" is action. The name itself stands for purpose and being - both of which imply an eternal sense of action.

Words gain symbolic power through their use. Symbols central to the Witnesses define their reality and the meaning behind that reality. Botting and Botting argue that one of the most prominent symbols is Jehovah himself because Jehovah is an omniscient, omnipotent universal force, which represents power as well as the ultimate concern of the universe since "without Jehovah, nothing would exist" (6). This understanding that Jehovah is universal consequently inserts him into all things and imbues all things with a cosmic purpose and a divine nature.

When a term, or word symbol, describes something, it functions as a Burkean "terministic screen." A "terministic screen" is the relationship between a term's essence (or meaning) and the way a term is used to communicate one's reality (Language 1341). A term functions to direct the attention to a certain idea or concept and functions as a screen, or filter, through which lived experience is interpreted. As a result, an earthquake perceived through a "Jehovah" lens (or terministic screen) obtains a different significance than when an earthquake is perceived through the terministic screens of a geologist. Put the term "Jehovah" over one's eyes and it will direct one's vision into a specific direction, while simultaneously blinding one from seeing any other type of reality. Edward Sapir adds to this notion with his claim that:

. . .the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. . . .We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation [emphasis added]. (qtd. in Whorf 134)

Terministic screens allow a group's language to reflect/refract its culture and its identity. Because language and culture integrate, with each begetting the other, language users often times cannot consciously identify the reasons why they interpret the world the way they do without a concerted effort.

Divine Texts

To put the term "Jehovah" over one's eyes, one can read the term in a sacred Biblical text, which evidences, for believers, the existence of a divine creator. The Witnesses developed their own Bible, which they titled The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT). It centralizes Jehovah. The Witnesses explain:

An outstanding feature of the New World Translation involved the restoration of God's name, Jehovah. In ancient copies of the Hebrew Bible, the divine name is represented by four consonants that may be translated as YHWH or JHVH [and] superstitious fears caused the Jewish people to cease using the divine name. Following the death of Jesus' apostles, copyists of the Greek Scriptures began replacing God's personal

name with the Greek words ky'ri·os (Lord) or The·os (God). Sad to say, modern translators have perpetuated this God-dishonoring tradition, eliminating God's name from most Bibles and even concealing that God has a name. (WT 15 Oct 1999: 29)

By inserting the name "Jehovah" into such a text (or, according to the Witnesses, by correctly re-inserting this name into the text), and by using the name within their group name, an intertextual relationship forms between the text and its users. The text embodies the name (and the personal name at that), elevates its symbolic significance through divine association and through its exclusive usage, and functions as a way to continually access and know Jehovah. The Watchtower even states, "The Bible presents the greatest indications we have as to God's qualities and ways, it can aid us to become attuned to his image" (1 Apr 1975:212).

Such a textually based relationship ties to Burke's primary concern in The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology, which focuses on a human's relationship to the word God. Burke explains that "Theological doctrine is a body of spoken or written words. Whatever else it may be,

and wholly regardless of whether it be true or false, theology is preeminently verbal. It is words about 'God'" [emphasis in original] (vi). Word symbols function as the only way to access and communicate any sense about God. The words come to share a consubstantial identification between God and the word "God." Whether God exists does not matter because the word "God" exists. The mere existence of this word creates believers because the word allows for the expression of such a belief.

Moreover, that words exist at all can also be used to evidence a god or a creator. "The Word" and the word "God" are presented in the Bible as a related, or even unified, entity. Consider the passage in John 1:1, in the NWT, which reads "In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." While this particular translation departs from all other Christian translations, such as in The King James Version (KJV) or in the New International Version (NIV), which both state that "the Word was God" (as opposed to "a" god), the principle remains the same - that, in the beginning, the Word and God theoretically shared the same space and may have even been the same entity.

Beliefs that follow a fundamental religious text (i.e. the Bible) are of particular importance because, in that text, the Word and God share a significant relationship. Even Burke alludes to the relationship shared between language and the beginning of the universe as he writes "The ultimate origins of language seem to me as mysterious as the origins of the universe itself" [emphasis in original] (Language 1340). Burke differs from religious language users, however, because he acknowledges the mystery behind the origins of language, while religious language users rely on their own language as evidence for the validity and certainty of their beliefs. Their texts provide the evidence needed for their own claims.

In fact, the Bible offers a widely accepted historical collection of records and events that evidence past prophetic fulfillment, which then evidence the possibility for future prophecies and their fulfillment. The Watchtower explains that "unlike myths, the Bible includes names and dates as well as genealogical and geographical details in its historical accounts" (1 Mar 2002:5). In this way, the Bible obtains a sense of authority in its presentation of details that, on the surface, do not always tie to the supernatural or divine. These details belong to

a more secular-based category of information because in the secular (and scientific world), names, dates, and geographical details represent objective fact.

At the same time, because the Bible represents the Word of God, it also possesses a sense of accepted divine authority, transcending the idea that mere humans produced it. The Watchtower explains that the Bible is from God:

Because it contains information that simply could not originate with men. Humans cannot predict with unerring accuracy what will happen just a few months from today. The Bible, however, contains many prophecies written long in advance, which have been accurately fulfilled or are in the course of fulfillment. Though written during a period of over sixteen centuries, the Bible is not a book filled with conflicting or shifting philosophies, as would be expected from a work originating with men. Its inner harmony clearly points to a divine origin. (15 Feb 1975: 114-5)

As noted earlier, the text provides evidence for its own validity, especially in the method of its creation. The Witnesses rely upon the time they believe it took to write the Bible to support the assertion that among different men

and among different times, the Bible, and its prophecies, share a unity and connectedness that would be unachievable if left only to human devices. According to The Watchtower, "The harmony and balance of the 66 canonical books of the Bible testify to their unity and completeness. Thus, you do well to accept them for what they truthfully are, Jehovah's Word of inspired truth. . ." [emphasis added] (15 Feb 2006:15). The perceived objective quality of the dates, names, and events tied with the perceived accuracy of fulfilled divine prophecy establishes the Bible as one of the most reliable textual sources to justify and perpetuate a belief system. It has the ability to function as its own evidence and authority making it a powerful rhetorical symbol, especially for identification rhetoric. Identification rhetoric relies upon symbols of authority to function because one must be persuaded, intentionally or unintentionally, to accept authority or to strive to achieve authority. Authority and human culture share an intrinsic relationship since hierarchy plays a fundamental role in human society and its desire for order.

While the Bible functions as textual evidence for God and his associated divine prophecies, it also functions as a medium through which God conveys his purposes. According

to the NIV, "In Hebrew Scripture, the Word was an agent of creation (Psalm 33:6)[and] the source of God's message to his people through the prophets (Hosea 1:2). . . ." (1869). The Watchtower confirms this assertion with its statement that "Jehovah conveys spiritual light primarily through his inspired Word, the Bible" and that "Through the Bible, Jehovah sheds light on his purposes and tells us how we can do his will. This gives purpose to our lives and helps to satisfy our spiritual needs" (1 Mar 2002: 8). The establishment, communication, and evidence of belief systems depend on their religious texts.

Upon reading the Witnesses' literature, one may conclude that they consider words about God as more important than the abstract entity of God himself because of how much they emphasize "God's Word" as opposed to God himself. For instance, Witnesses reference "'the sword of the spirit, that is God's word'" and that "'The word of God is alive and exerts power. . ..'" (WT 1 Oct 1999:11). Also, "no one today hears a literal voice or receives a personal message from God. The 'word' that is heard comes to all of us in the same way. First and foremost, it comes through the inspired Scriptures, the Bible. . . ." and that ". . .for good spiritual health, we need to read the Bible and

meditate on it regularly" (WT 15 May 1999:17). Finally, "Those who love God's Word are safeguarded. . ." (WT 1 Nov 1999:15).

Though The Watchtower focuses on "God's Word" almost more than God himself, through the principles of identification rhetoric, God and words become one in the same entity within the Bible and other sacred texts. In this way, the Bible becomes a physical symbol for God. While the Witnesses often criticize Catholics for their use of icons, such as religious statues in the Church, the Witnesses incessant depiction of the Bible, and even their own group's literature, could be considered a physical representation or manifestation (and symbolic icon) of God.

Further, their depictions of themselves with such literature could symbolize their relationship with the Word (God) (See Figure 2). Figure 3 depicts a portion of the many different translations of their Bible. Symbolically, this depiction illustrates their Bible reaching all over the world and realizes the group's motivation to reach all areas of the Earth with God's Word. Clearly, Witnesses possess a textual identity, and the creation of their own personal translation of the Bible reinforces their distinct identity.



Figure 2. Depictions of Witnesses and Their Relationship to Their Bible and Society Literature.

Source: What Does the Bible Teach? Brooklyn: The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2005. 6, 93, 113, 163.

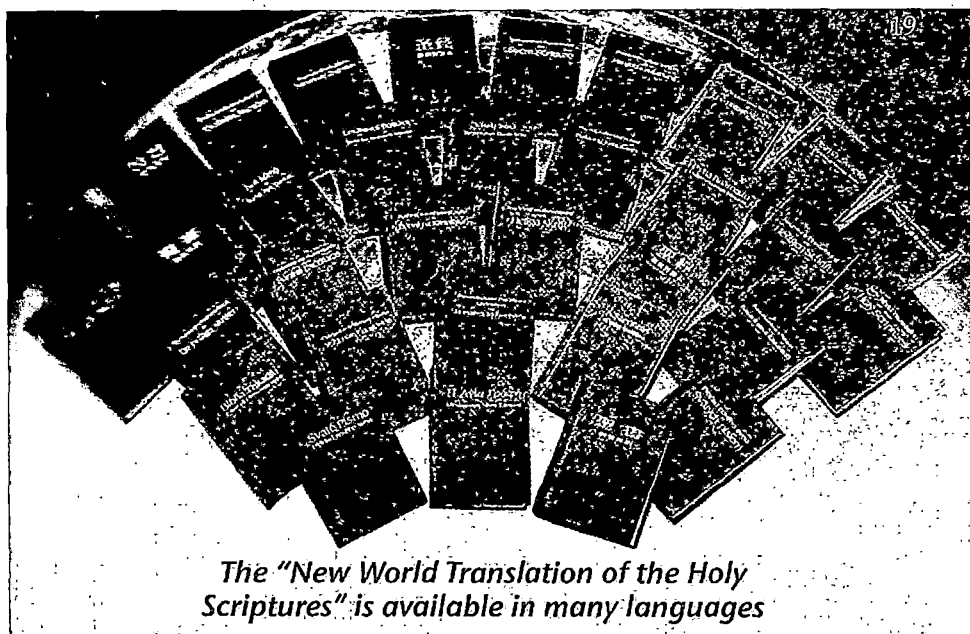


Figure 3. A Symbolic Representation of the Witness Bible Expanding Over the Earth.

Source: What Does the Bible Teach? Brooklyn: The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Year. 19.

The supplemental texts that the Witnesses' publish and distribute further emphasize their textual identity. Such texts include The Watchtower, Awake!, Examining the Scriptures Daily, Insight, Yearbooks, Kingdom News, What Does the Bible Really Teach? and various other texts too numerous to list, but which can be accessed via their electronic 2010 Watchtower Library. Even in the international headquarters of the Witnesses, called Bethel, located in Brooklyn, New York, and within 75 branch offices

through the world, "there are upward of a thousand workers who are engaged primarily in printing and publishing the literature of the society a minimum of 8 hours a day for 5 and one-half days a week" and that "none receives pay" since "each person carries on. . .because of a 'sense of mission'" (Eddy 115). These materials aid, supposedly, in Bible study to help further their understanding of Jehovah. Further, their desire to imitate and identify with Jesus' teaching practice to spread the "Good News" perpetuates their sense of mission and textual identity.

As demonstrated already within The Watchtower material used in this study, a scriptural reference ties to almost every claim made within The Watchtower. The Bible and The Watchtower become inseparable bodies of text. As a result, the supplemental texts have the ability to become consubstantial with the Bible and, by default, adopt the same notion of divine authority. At times, it can be difficult to ascertain that The Watchtower differs from the Bible in terms of the way it provides, and even mandates, guiding life principles. In this way, a body of literature exists that appears like a collection of different texts; however, all the texts communicate the same messages. Having this body of related literature gives the illusion

that different information exists that all attests to the same conclusion (much like how the different books of the Bible reference each other). In fact, "Jehovah's Witnesses are not encouraged to read widely; Watch Tower Society literature. . .is deemed to be sufficient fodder for any active mind" (Botting and Botting xix). Since so much Society literature exists, one may be more inclined to agree that the Society's literature is broadly sufficient. More importantly, no other sources are considered necessary because only divinely inspired sources matter.

In addition, the vast amount of the society's literature functions to "keep the current body of symbols alive for the membership [and] consists necessarily of constant repetition of the basic viable symbolic themes. This repetition becomes mantric in quality. . ." (Botting and Botting 94-5). Such a recycling and repetitive use of text functions as a "body of identifications," which ". . .owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill" (Burke Rhetoric 1328). The rhetoric of identification does not require exceptional rhetorical skill because the persuasion occurs through the mere repeated acceptance and performance of the rhetoric. The

language itself provides the motive to act; the language mandates that one must continue to read it. As a result, the language recycles constantly through a reader's mind, and this recycling of language reinforces the group's identity.

The Witnesses' text encourages repeated acceptance and performance of their group language. The Watchtower states, "May our confidence in God's promises be constantly renewed by regular Bible study and meaningful prayer. May we never cease to experience Jehovah's blessing as we obey his Word" (WT 1 Jan 1999:20). Bible study does not just require regular Bible study. Instead, Bible study includes reading the Bible with The Watchtower or any other Society-based publication regularly. For example, The Watchtower advises that, in addition to reading chapters assigned from the Bible, "With some planning, we can also find the time to prepare for the Congregation Book Study and the Watchtower study" (15 Sept 2002: 12-3). The Bible and the Society's literature become equally important, and eventually, inseparable, especially when their meetings at their Kingdom Hall derive material from the Bible and The Watchtower.

The Witnesses encourage a repetitive performance within their literature not just through the incessant reading of it, but also through the asking and answering of questions embedded within it (see Figure 4). The assigned reading contains questions, and a microphone is passed around for public performance of answers during Kingdom Hall meetings. This performance reiterates Burke's notion that identification rhetoric contains a motive to act. Rhetorically, this performance makes the Bible and The Watchtower consubstantially divine influences, while simultaneously requiring a public performance of their rhetoric.

YOU CAN ENDURE TO THE END

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."—HEBREWS 12:1.

“YOU have need of endurance,” wrote the apostle Paul to the first-century Hebrew Christians. (Hebrews 10:36) Emphasizing the importance of this quality, the apostle Peter likewise urged Christians: “Supply to your faith . . . endurance.” (2 Peter 1:5, 6) But what exactly is endurance?

“A Greek-English lexicon defines the Greek verb for “endure” as “*remain instead of fleeing . . . stand one’s ground, hold out.*” Concerning the Greek noun for “endurance,” one reference work says: “It is the spirit which can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope. It is

firm in the face of obstacles and hardships and not lose hope. Who especially have need of this quality?”

“All Christians are figuratively engaged in a race that requires endurance. In about the year 65 C.E., the apostle Paul wrote to his fellow worker and faithful traveling companion Timothy these reassuring words: “I have fought the fine fight, I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7) With the expression “run the course to the finish,” Paul was comparing his life as a Christian to a race, with a set course and a finish line. By that time, Paul was tri-

1, 2. What does it mean to endure?

3, 4. (a) Who have need for endurance? (b) Why must we endure to the end?

glory because beyond the pain it sees the goal.” Endurance, then, enables one to stand

1, 2. What does it mean to endure?

the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

3, 4. (a) Who have need for endurance? (b) Why must we endure to the end?

THE WATCHTOWER—OCTOBER 1, 1999 17

Figure 4. A Sample Page from The Watchtower.

Source: The Watchtower. Brooklyn: The Watch Tower

Bible and Tract Society, 1 Oct. 1999. 17.

The mere asking of questions with readily available answers functions to persuade one that he or she can participate in a critical thinking exercise; however, the questions are provided for the reader, not by the reader. As a result, “The responses are always the same. I have never heard a reply given which in any way would challenge the validity of the position taken in the text” (Eddy 116).

In this way, the Bible, The Watchtower, and the reader's mind all become one linguistic entity.

Specialized group language further reinforces the creation of a mental linguistic entity. The society's publications and Bible provides specialized language, called "theocratic language." The Witnesses consider themselves a theocratic organization, which means "literally, 'ruled by God,' but used colloquially to mean 'good,' 'holy,' or 'faithful'" (Botting and Botting 193). While Burke emphasizes that language and culture reinforce each other, Botting and Botting agree, writing:

. . .theocratic language in many ways helps define Jehovah's Witnesses as a cultural group; it is often possible to detect a Witness just by listening to his or her social conversation. The 'theocratic language' includes the redefinition of standard English words, the emotional charging of words, the peculiar use of metaphor in argument, and the adoption of particular mannerisms of speech. (84)

Clearly, Witnesses use their specialized language to develop their unique and exclusive identity.

Using Burke's theory of identification rhetoric, it appears that the Witnesses developed their particular expressions over time as a result of their apocalyptic focus, with its heavy emphasis on morality (as noted in Chapter 2). This focus on morality and the apocalypse forms a terministic screen through which the Witnesses develop their specialized terminology. Botting and Botting argue that "The Witnesses. . .approve of such a special vocabulary which they feel helps to ensure their loyalty to the society" (83). Such loyalty manifests in their conduct and in their use of group-exclusive words, especially considering how certain terms have quite a different meaning when used in a secular sense. Table 1 provides some examples of specialized theocratic language.

Table 1. Examples of Witness Theocratic Language.

Standard Word	Theocratic Version/Meaning
Happiness	Happinesses, happifying experiences
Christianity	Christendom
Penis	Male organ
Vagina	Birth canal
Evolution	Pronounced "Evil-you-shun"
Brother/Sister	Title given to one "in the Truth"
Mr./Mrs./Miss	A title used when referring to someone not "in the Truth"; refers to a "worldly person"
Goat	One opposed to Jehovah's Witnesses

Source: Botting, Gary, and Barbara Botting. The Orwellian World of Jehovah's Witnesses. Toronto, Canada: U of Toronto P, 1984. 83-4, 86, 88, 189.

An important part of Witness conversion involves adopting this theocratic language and to "put on a new personality" (Botting and Botting 83). Potential converts must switch from a heavy emphasis on reading the NWT Bible to an emphasis on reading The Watchtower. This textual switch provides the future Witness with the necessary

verbiage and social imperatives that will unquestionably identify that person as a Witness (Botting and Botting 77-8). Such an identification functions both for others and for the self, which results in one participating in both an external performance and, thus, an internal reinforcement since repeated reading of such texts imbues one's mind with the language of the group. Such a practice reflects Burke's "I addressing its me," where the cultivation and recycling of the same thoughts perpetuates the formation of an identity tied to such thoughts; therefore, the "new personality" (identity) takes effect simply as a result of using Society-based language (action).

Also, since The Watchtower provides instructions on how to live one's life, the reader becomes dependent upon each issue for continued instruction. The language encourages certain actions, an example of which is to continually read it; thus, the language enters a constant recycling in the mind of the Witness.

The Collective Versus The Individual

Using The Watchtower (rather than just the Bible) reflects a move away from both individuality and individual interpretation when it comes to understanding the Bible

(thus God). Carolyn Wah explains that the sect uses The Watchtower as the primary instrument to defend and dispense information about Jehovah's Kingdom (165). As God used prophets to communicate Biblical messages, the Witnesses rely on the Governing Body to provide spiritual insight about Jehovah and his plans for establishing his Kingdom on earth via the apocalypse. The Governing Body is a fourteen-member group that resides at the top of the Witness sect and functions as an instrument through which Jehovah speaks. Applying the Burkean Pentad to this social dynamic, the Governing Body becomes the agency (instrument) through which God communicates his purpose.

Acting as this instrument in the drama of the cosmic battle likens the Governing Body to the Biblical prophets. Such prophets are recognized as human, but also as divine channels. The Witnesses acknowledge that humans help to guide them; however, they argue that they follow:

. . . Jesus Christ and not some man or group of men as leaders on earth. . . . Yes, imperfect men are being used to help us, from the governing body to the elders in our congregations, but these have the heavy responsibility to teach

strictly in accord with the Word of God. (WT 15
Aug 1975: 509)

Emphasis remains on group leadership originating with God, and this divine origin fosters and maintains the divide that the Witnesses establish between the human leaders of the secular world and the divine Jehovah. Again, while the rhetoric of identification functions to identify societies, it also must divide them.

The Watchtower retains a sense of independence from human origination through its intentional anonymous authorship. Botting and Botting explain:

None of the society's publications since 1942 acknowledge authorship - a reflection. . .that all inspiration comes directly from God through the organization, led by the faceless 'writing committee' of the Governing Body. (41)

The purpose statement, printed on the inside cover of each Watchtower magazine, preserves the anonymous authorship they strive to achieve. This statement reads, "THE PURPOSE OF THE WATCHTOWER is to exalt Jehovah God as sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy" and "It adheres to the Bible as its authority." (n.pag.). The pronoun "it" in the quotation

helps the text function as an authority unto itself in relation to Jehovah and the Bible. Such verbiage subverts the human writer while simultaneously emphasizing that the message is God's.

The pronoun "it" also functions symbolically to reinforce that there is no individual, human self-interest involved. The magazine, presented as an entity unto itself, simply reports apocalyptic world events as they occur or when God intends to reveal them. The Witnesses explain, "'No prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by [the] holy spirit' (2 Pet. 1:20, 21)" (WT 1 Mar 1975:144-5). Once again, the faith-based understanding that the Holy Spirit, as God's active force, travels through human beings works to identify them with God. They become extensions of him; the language they use is God's language.

The Watchtower reinforces the notion that the Bible and the Society's associated texts have no connection to humanity or to the kind of trickery as would be found with human philosophies. They explain:

Paul warned Ephesian Christians that if they put their faith in [human philosophies and traditions] they would be like spiritual babes "tossed about as by waves. . .by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error". (Ephesians 4:14) Today, "trickery of men" is promoted by the propaganda of those who oppose divine truth. "Propaganda" is defined by The New Encyclopedia Britannica as "the systemic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions" [and] to find the truth in the face of such insidious pressures, we must diligently consult the Scriptures. (1 Mar 2002: 14)

Automatically, this quotation pits the words of humans against those of God without even considering the possibility that the words of God could be the words of mere humans. Words in the Bible come from God. The writers also associate manipulative persuasion with only human thought and words. God is indefinitely exempt from any attempt to manipulate. (It appears they never considered the possibility that human trickery could make human words could appear as God's.) Interestingly, the

writers reference The Encyclopedia Britannica to use it as a pre-accepted form of secular authority to add weight to their argument, despite the fact that humans composed such an encyclopedia.

Ironically, despite their previous claims about Biblical clarity, the Witnesses also acknowledge that "Rather than stating his will or purpose plainly at times, Jehovah has intentionally obscured his prophetic sayings, using analogies, mystifying 'dark sayings,' or riddles that perplex" (WT 1 Oct 1999: 26). Conveniently, such riddles and obscure prophetic sayings require assistance from spiritually endowed men for accurate interpretations, giving the Governing Body a purpose.

A distinction forms between the average human being and one that God chooses to assist other humans in their understanding of God. Burke's Rhetoric of Identification functions, in this instance, to identify such spiritually-endowed humans with God, making them consubstantial with him, so that, again, they are simply delivering his message - not a human message.

The Authority of the Divine Human

Though the Witnesses repeatedly emphasize that God inspired the message of the Bible and the messages housed within The Watchtower, fourteen humans occupy one of the most authoritative positions of the organization - the Governing Body. This group resides in the most authoritative position in the group's hierarchy - the top from which all group literature and information originates.

Holland explains Burke's theory on the importance of authority, writing that ". . .in analyzing a poem, play, or any document expressed in language, [Burke] would look for symbols of authority. . ." (11). Botting and Botting add "insofar as there is a critical point in the conversion process, it centers around the acceptance or the rejection of the claims to authority made by the Society's officers at all levels of the hierarchy" (77). Authority, especially pre-accepted forms, functions as a primary rhetorical power within language, especially when combined with the divine authority associated with Biblical texts. Authority can function as a rhetorical power within language because humans enter into authoritative constructs upon birth.

Pre-accepted forms of authority begin with "pre-political childhood," which "is experienced in terms of family relationships that are themselves shaped by tribal or national conditions as a whole" (Burke Religion 197). Within these relationships, parents occupy the primary positions of established authority. As such, humans are well-socialized to accept certain forms of authority, especially when tied to the family unit.

In the Witness sect, the text is not the only symbol of authority that exists; rather, the text becomes the body of symbols that the Governing Body (a symbol of authority) uses to repeatedly affirm their authoritative position. In this way, The Watchtower aligns with the Bible. Combined, these texts align with, and ultimately come from, the Governing Body. The Governing Body obtains its authority to write and publish such texts through the representation of itself within the text as God's mouthpiece. Botting and Botting write that "Behind the power of this organization to dominate the lives of so many people is the acceptance of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society quite literally as the voice of Jehovah - God's 'mouthpiece'" (153).

Witnesses even liken Jesus' relationship to his father in a similar way, writing that:

[Jesus] reminded his listeners again and again that everything he taught originated not with himself, but with his heavenly Father. (John 7:16; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10) He loved divine truths far too much to replace them with his own thinking. (WT 15 Aug 2002:11)

The Governing Body acts as a divine messenger from Jehovah. In turn, once the Witnesses receive these divine messages, they then can become divine messengers themselves, spreading Jehovah's purpose to potential converts.

Also, consider the following Watchtower statement, which reinforces the necessary relationship between the Governing Body and the Bible, ". . .the Bible is organization-minded and it cannot be fully understood without our having the Theocratic organization in mind. . . .All the sheep in God's flock must be organization-minded like the Bible" (qtd. in Botting and Botting 66). The Theocratic organization refers directly to the Governing Body. That the Governing Body authored this statement shows how they bind themselves to the Bible and its interpretations, while writing themselves into the text as a symbol of authority.

Witness texts frequently use the term "organization." The term represents a unified body of people who share in a belief, made systematic through its embodiment in group texts. The fact the organization or group exists reflects the successful operation of identity rhetoric. Ideas espoused in The Watchtower maintain the group identity. For instance:

the Society has of late been most adamant that the Governing Body collectively is the sole channel of communication from God to man. It has actively discouraged independent Bible study. .among members at large [and that] "The Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization; not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah's visible organization in mind" [emphasis added]. (qtd. in Botting and Botting 65)

Emphasis upon the absolute need to belong to an organization reinforces the idea that only the organization provides access to divine Truth. Requiring that one belong

to an organization to access Truth requires that one identify with said organization. In this way, belief gets well established rather than inviting the possibility for many different interpretations via individual, thus vulnerable, paths. Eradicating the individual also establishes a consensus in belief, giving it even more authoritative influence. Rather than having one individual believe certain beliefs, they have a large group sharing the same beliefs; therefore, one can interpret the belief system as reasonable and valid.

It should be noted, however, that this eradication of the individual may not be an intentional or even malfeasant goal. Botting and Botting write that few actually believe the members of the Governing Body intentionally produce God-inspired messages for any malfeasant reason (i.e. ill-intentioned control). Instead, they argue that members of the Governing Body believe sincerely that God has chosen to manage and direct the Witnesses as a whole (154). Again, identification rhetoric does not operate fundamentally on the premise of persuading for some visible or intentional purpose. Such persuasion functions subtly and silently for the self-as-audience, which will be later explored in depth.

A key point of identification rhetoric used by the Governing Body lies in their advocacy of divinely inspired prophecy regarding the apocalypse. A prophecy simply must have a prophet. The Governing Body functions as a prophet (or group of prophets) for the Witnesses; therefore, acceptance of the prophecy translates to acceptance of the prophet. As a result, no one questions the Governing Body regarding any notion of control or its seemingly desirous destruction of the earth. Rather, "Though earthly kings are the instruments used, it is the 'spirit,' the motivating force from his mouth, that decrees the destruction" (WT 1 May 1975: 271). Jehovah remains the focus - not the Governing Body.

While the Governing Body functions as a group of prophets, they possess a more symbolic title known as "the faithful and discreet slave class" as stated in the following from The Watchtower:

Today, Jehovah does not inspire prophets as in the past; instead he has commissioned a faithful slave class to provide timely spiritual food to his household. (Matthew 24:45-47) How important, therefore, that we have an obedient attitude toward that 'slave'! (1 Oct 2002: 17)

This quotation contains two prominent terms that form part of the identity and subsequent behavior of the Witnesses. The first term is "slave," which is applied to the Governing Body, despite its high place in the theocratic hierarchy. Despite the generally accepted pejorative meaning behind this term, the Witnesses look with favor upon the term, and interestingly, argue that the slave is to be obeyed. In fact, the Witnesses claim that Jesus calls his disciples "slaves" because he would purchase them by his own blood (WT 15 Jan 1975: 45). Such terminology may contribute to further removing any ill-intentions for control, either within the Governing Body, or within the group of Witnesses, since the term creates a subverted status. Such a subverted status also keeps the group eternally below God and away from any symbolic identification with the prideful Satan.

The second term worth noting from the quotation is "spiritual food." Spiritual food is a symbol with two possible definitions. One form of spiritual food comprises the group's literature. A concept repeated throughout their literature is that "Through the congregation, 'the faithful and discreet slave' provides nourishing spiritual food 'at the proper time.' - Matthew 24:45" (WT 15 May

1999: 26). The Governing Body provides literature, or food, to all Witnesses, and provides their primary form of spiritual nourishment; yet, their literature repeatedly , emphasizes that all things are to be revealed over time, which they refer to as "increasing light." (This "increasing light" concept will be discussed in Chapter 5.) Food given at the proper time, as noted in the quotation, implies that such food must be consumed in stages (which could represent how they deal with any doctrinal changes over time). Such spiritual food represents a way to consume God, and his message, taking both into the self, so that one may become divine or God-like. One becomes the principles of the language one uses.

The same principle of becoming and being divine also ties to another form of spiritual food and spiritual nourishment: the consumption of the body and blood of Jesus. The Witnesses engage in this practice, like other Christian religions, except they only partake of the body and blood (emblems) once a year during The Memorial and only the Remnant (those 144,000 chosen ones) are to partake (Botting & Botting xxxiii). Each Witness passes the emblems to the next. Only a member of the remnant will consume. Otherwise, the emblems remain unconsumed. One

knows one is of the Remnant if they feel an overwhelming sense of the Holy Spirit within them (WT 1 Feb 1999: 19).

According to Catholicism, bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ through "transubstantiation." (How closely that word resembles Burke's word "consubstantial.") The definitions of transubstantiation and consubstantial both argue the idea that one becomes the other in substance. The emblems represent a symbolic identification - a unification of bread and wine and body and blood, respectively.

Both forms of spiritual food (the literature and the emblems) tie to the notion of a symbolic God-eating. According to Jim Walker, God-eating is a practice that ". . . lies at the belief of absorbing his nature into [one's] own, thus becoming, in some sense, more godlike, similar to the even more primitive belief that eating one's enemies makes one more powerful" (n.pag.). If one receives spiritual food in either form, one will more likely identify with God and develop a likeness to his image thus becoming consubstantially identified with God.

The Watchtower states that Witnesses are to ". . . cultivate the godly qualities that [their] Creator exemplifies, and [they] will endeavor to imitate his

personality and his ways, as Jesus did. (Ephesians 5:1)" (15 May 1999: 19-20). Further, N.H. Knorr, president of the Watchtower Society, argues that "People need to be helped to be 'in God's image,' manifesting his qualities" (WT 1 May 1975: 285). It seems logical that their literature makes use of the term "spiritual food" considering how it reinforces the drive to develop a likeness to God. In becoming like God, one comes to not only identify with God, but unify with God, which ties to traditional notions of God-eating. This unification promotes the hope that believers will survive the apocalypse and motivates continuous eating of such "spiritual food."

The True Christian

While both Witnesses and Catholics participate in a form of remembering Jesus through the sacrifice they believe he made, offering his body and blood for the redemption of humankind, the Witnesses use their literature to manifest a staunch division between themselves and other "Christians," particularly Catholics. In their magazines and in their proselytizing, the Witnesses use subtle attacks on other Christian belief systems to either avert potential converts away from those religions or to win

current, but dissatisfied members. Such attacks reinforce the divide between the beliefs of the Witnesses and other Christian denominations. Many attacks towards other Christians, all of which are grouped and referred to as "Christendom," center upon symbols of paganism - symbols that possess a negative connotation in many Christian belief systems. Because the Witnesses refer to all other Christians as "Christendom," the term will be used in this study also to help differentiate between the Witnesses' understanding of the true "Christian" (themselves) and those that they argue are not in the truth.

The Witnesses are aware of how sensitive those in Christendom are to paganism. The thought that Christianity maintains pagan beliefs introduces doubt about the authenticity of the other Christian belief systems. The Witnesses capitalize upon the appearance of pagan concepts in Christendom's teachings by bringing them to light in contrast with what they believe, which, ideally from a Christian standpoint, does not contain pagan symbols and beliefs. Such arguments continue to reinforce the divide between the Witnesses and Christendom, reinforcing the Witness identity as being something different from other Christians, while at the same time, arguing that they are

the only true Christian group in existence. The Witnesses even differentiate between the words "religion" and "truth." In this differentiation, they do not refer to their belief system as a "religion" because religion is said to belong to "imperfect men" (Sprague 139). Their faith is presented so differently that it cannot be identified with other religions or even called a "religion."

Examples of the differences that the Witnesses highlight between themselves and other religions can be found throughout The Watchtower. For instance, the attack upon Christendom and their perceived pagan ties can be found in the following:

Leaders and people in general in Christendom prefer their own religious creeds over the truths of God that Jesus taught. The clergy are especially at fault. They refuse to use Jehovah's name, even taking it out of their Bible versions. They dishonor Jehovah with unscriptural teachings, such as the pagan doctrines of eternal torment in hellfire, the Trinity, immortality of the soul, and evolution. (WT 1 May 2002: 21)

The fundamental beliefs listed in the quotation above provoke question about why hellfire, the Trinity, immortality of the soul, and evolution are pagan-based. For any unsatisfied Christian, such identification could motivate a search into the Witness belief system, carrying with that search the potential for conversion. At the same time, arguments like the above continue to reinforce for Witnesses why they should stay away from pursuing beliefs housed within Christendom.

To keep Witnesses from pursuing any belief in Christendom, the term "pagan" must be identified with negative connotations. Negative connotations abound with references to sex. The Witnesses further divide their belief system with other religions, particularly Catholicism, by highlighting the sexual pagan symbols they are said to use. The symbol of the cross inextricably ties to Christianity. The Witnesses refuse to use the cross, which again, helps them to reinforce their identity as something separate from Christendom. The Witnesses argue that Christ did not die on a cross, but rather a stake. They remove the cross because "The cross and church steeples are held to be signs of decadent pagan influence and are regarded as being phallic symbols" (Botting and

Botting 26). The Witnesses even refer to the Catholic Church as a harlot or prostitute. The Watchtower states that "She is the religious 'great harlot,' with whom the 'kings of the earth committed fornication whereas those who inhabit the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. - Rev. 17:1, 2" (1 May 1975: 270). Figure 5 illustrates how Jesus was crucified (according to the Witness understanding), which is a stark contrast to the common symbol of Jesus on the cross.

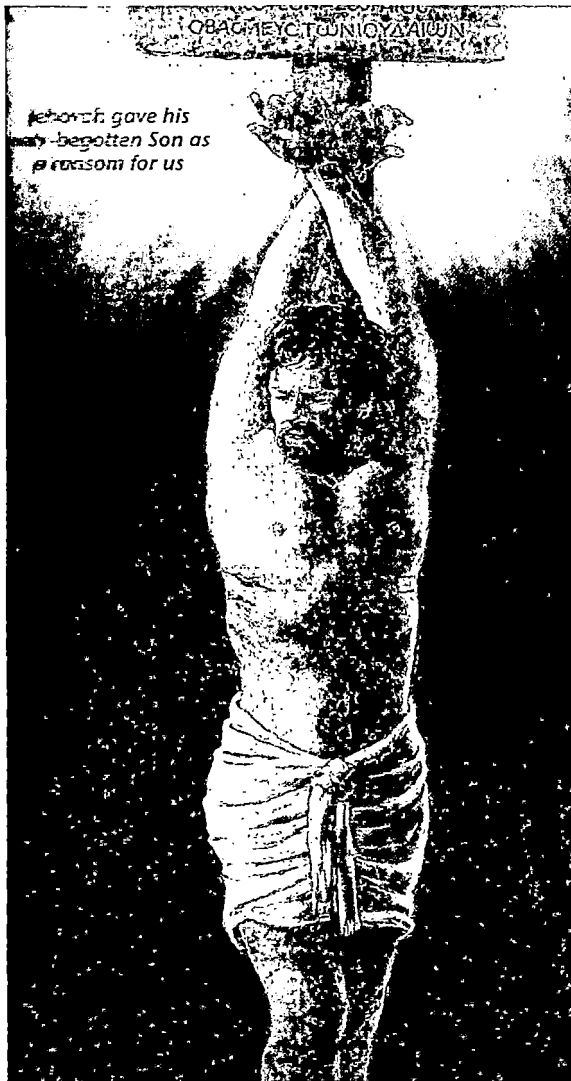


Figure 5. The Witness

Depiction of Jesus'

Crucifixion.

Source: What Does The Bible Really Teach? Brooklyn: The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2005. 52.

Figure 6 illustrates how the Witnesses depict the Catholic Church, and its leaders, within their literature. Graphically, this image identifies Catholics with violence and provoking war, while implying that Witnesses have no such association

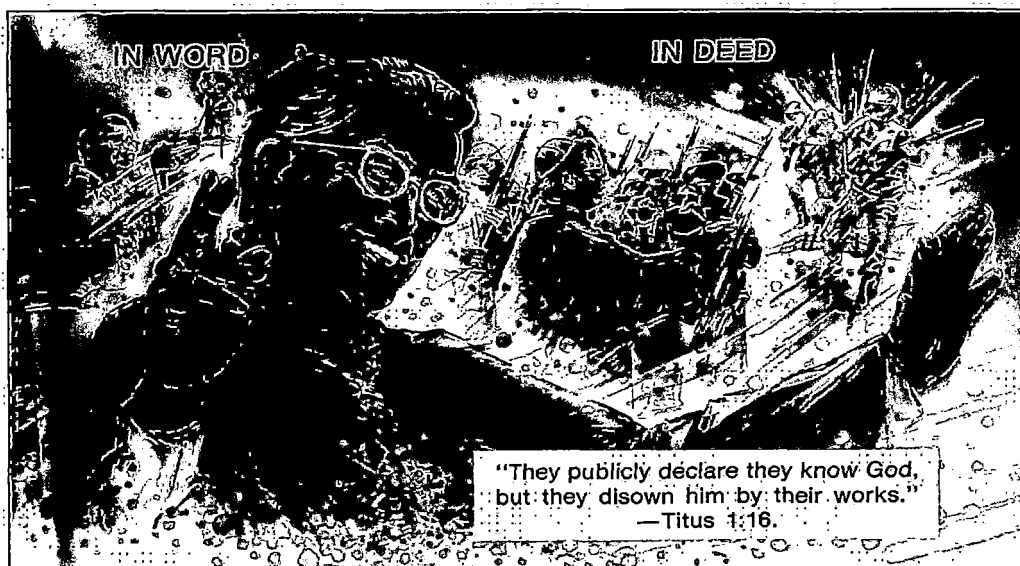


Figure 6. The Witnesses' Negative Depiction of a Catholic Priest.

Source: You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth.

Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989.

29.

If Witnesses cannot capture converts based solely upon identifying their cause with world conditions, they can attempt to gain converts through dividing their beliefs

from others' beliefs, making their beliefs appear more sound and logical by focusing upon specific, concrete identifications for their audiences. Again, they invite one to make a choice between organized religions and the Witnesses. Based on both the word symbols and the imagery, one who doubts organized religion will see a distinct difference between its beliefs and those of the Witnesses.

Witnesses emphasize their reliance upon the Bible, knowing that many organized religions, such as Catholicism, are thought of as non-Biblical. Growing up Catholic, I can attest to how little the Bible was used during mass. Instead, one uses a Catholic missal during the mass. The Bible itself is not a focus; rather portions of it get incorporated into sermons, gospels, and the Catechism. The emphasis on the Bible also varies from Catholic Church to Catholic Church with some using it more than others. Bringing this disparity to light invites doubt in a Catholic's mind regarding the validity of his or her beliefs.

Conversely, the Witnesses point directly to the Bible itself as their evidence for their beliefs and tell outsiders to examine, for themselves, what the Witnesses

teach and how their teachings compare to Bible teachings.

The Watchtower says:

Jehovah's Witnesses will be glad to sit down with you and point out the answers that the Bible gives to problems that you face as an individual and to those that confront mankind as a whole. Then you can decide for yourself, based on what you have seen in your own copy of the Bible, whether the message that they present is the truth. If you see that it really is in harmony with God's Word, then believe it and prove yourself to be a genuine follower of God's son, Jesus Christ [emphasis added]. (1 Jan 11975: 29)

In this instance, the Witnesses even suggest that outsiders use their own copy of the Bible to check the "validity" of their message. Not only does this suggestion reinforce the non-forceful approach they take, but it also forms a direct relationship between Witness beliefs and what any Christian Bible teaches. The next function, then, is to introduce concepts that attack the religion via Biblical differences to justify the use of the NWT Bible alongside other Witness texts as opposed to any other Bible translation (e.g. to

point out the lack of God's personal name, Jehovah, in other Bibles).

This relationship between religious claims and Biblical claims gives the illusion that some popular questions, such as where humans go when they die, have solid answers. I use the word "illusion" because, though the Witnesses often reference the Bible as concrete evidence, one still must accept that the Bible contains divine Truth (an abstract notion). For a person not initially religious, forming a relationship between the disasters of the world (concrete) and the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy (abstract) can assist with coming to view the Bible as valid Truth (concrete). The sacred Truth relies upon worldly evidence and adopts its concrete nature.

Emphasizing the Truth of the Bible and its ability to provide answers can provide comfort to those used to hearing "it's a mystery" as an answer to many philosophical questions. This answer illustrates another difference between the Witness beliefs and those of Catholicism because "it's a mystery" is an answer many Catholics are to accept. The Catholic sacraments are even referred to as "Sacred Mysteries," and the rosary is said to have "five

mysteries." The word "mystery" pervades the language of Catholicism. As such, the Witnesses can "erase" such mystery in their rhetorical presentations by eradicating the word from their lexicon and pointing to their Bible for answers to many common questions.

Alan Rogerson explains that "the chief field for [Witness] converts appears to be amongst disillusioned church members - people with a 'religious' outlook searching for answers to. . . questions. . . ." and that people of outside religions are ". . . provided with answers to all their questions as well as formulae for action in which they feel a sense of power in being able to function productively within their newfound community" (qtd. in Botting and Botting 81). The act of proselytizing gives Witnesses a sense of control over their situation and over the time of the end, which they hope to usher in to obtain paradise. They are far from passive church-goers. They live and ultimately are their belief system. It is not just a "Sunday religion." As a result, the action component helps to give them the feeling that they play an influential role in their destination. Such action helps them be the rhetoric they espouse; hence, it is a rhetoric based in their identity.

The Rhetoric of Division

As Burke states, the rhetoric of identification is as much about division as identification. The Witnesses' proselytizing efforts reinforce their own beliefs because they live what they believe, and part of living what they believe is to experience both the acceptance and the rejection of their apocalyptic message. Such a division illustrates how the state of the world will be in the end times, with some saved and most annihilated. Such division simply occupies a part of Jehovah's plan. The Watchtower explains that part of preaching the message about God's kingdom will allow people to ". . . identify themselves as being either for it or against it. (Matt 24:14; 25:31-46)" (1 Feb 1975: 87). The Watchtower also argues that:

Christ wanted his disciples to search out deserving ones, not to perform mass conversions. On several occasions he pointed out that the vast majority would not accept the good news, just as most Israelites did not listen to the prophets of old. - Ezekiel 9:4, Matthew 10:11-15; Mark 4:14-20. (15 Nov 1999: 29)

The Witnesses understand that their proselytizing produces a necessary division - one that has existed since Biblical

past as noted in the quoted material above. According to the Witnesses, these Biblical divisions are what Jehovah has purposed based on the understanding that Jehovah is a God of purpose who intends for things to happen as he purposes them to happen. If these divisions exist in the Bible, they must be what God wants.

To identify with the Witnesses, one must divide himself or herself from the world and all worldly matters, including education, careers, "earthly" governments, and even their "worldly" family. They emphasize this division quoting Jesus in Matthew 10:34-8:

I came to put, not peace, but a sword. For I came to cause division, with a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a young wife against her mother-in-law. Indeed a man's enemies will be persons of his own household. He that has greater affection for father or mother than for me is not worthy of me
[emphasis in original]. (qtd. in Botting and Botting 135)

Witness beliefs produce a unity attainable only through division. It may appear dire to follow what Jesus commands in the above quotation - especially one that calls for

placing immediate family as second; however, Jesus and the Witnesses preach a message of undying strength. Those willing to sacrifice everything for their cause are the types of people the Witnesses want in their group because they will likely be most devoted to spreading the message to gain future adherents. Those people will ensure the survival of the group identity.

G. Norman Eddy reinforces this idea, writing, "A sense of esprit de corps and the joy of fellowship with kindred minds are sources of great strength within the movement" [emphasis in original] (120). Those who share the same passion for the group identity (vice any other identity) will enjoy a sense of strength and safety that is more rewarding than any worldly connection could offer. The congregation becomes its own family and refers to itself as such, thus becoming symbolically and literally a "family" unit.

The familial terms used in Witness language illustrates this symbolism. For example, "The Bible-based education [that Witnesses] receive moves them to manifest brotherly love and tender affection for one another" [emphasis added] (WT 15 May 1999: 25). Another example from The Watchtower helps foster the idea of family

and security. It reads, "Therein, one can find a group of loving, concerned, and caring friends, who are ready and willing to help and comfort. . .in times of stress. - 2 Corinthians 7:5-7" (15 May 1999: 25). According to this terminology, the congregation gains an additional set of family members - a family that spans the entire earth. The idea that Jehovah can provide salvation and annihilation also helps one to adhere to his "family" instead of one's own human family.

The Witnesses build into their beliefs the need to keep a close-knit community and family. Zygmunt explains that the group has remained successful not only because the group maintains its millennial hopes (via methods that will be discussed later), but also because the group has developed itself as a self-confirming and socially isolating entity (942). Their group identification results in a social isolation because it divides them from outsiders. They reinforce their social isolation by discouraging interfaith marriages. The Watchtower states, "God's view of marrying an unbeliever is expressed at Malachi, 2:12: 'Jehovah will cut off each one that does it.' Thus, Christians are urged to marry 'only in the Lord.' (Corinthians 7:39)" (1 May 2002: 17). When a

Witness is "encouraged" to marry only another Witness, not only does this further reinforce the separation between the Witness community and the world, but also it helps establish the social dynamic for rearing children as Witnesses.

This social dynamic establishes pre-accepted forms of authority under which the child is raised, reinforcing acceptance of the belief system; however, children do face a different induction into the belief system than an adult convert. An adult convert has the option to respond to the identification rhetoric presented to them, whether features of the identification rhetoric address the current and projected state of the world, or if they are dissatisfied with their current religious beliefs. . The adult convert can make a choice, which Botting and Botting emphasize, writing, "The adult convert has made his choice against a backdrop of dissatisfaction with the world, and yearns within his own imagination for paradise only" (120).

Conversely, in most cases, the child has not yet lived the kind of life to develop a reasonable dissatisfaction with it; therefore, the literature they read must "create" this experience for them. Botting and Botting explain that ". . . children born into the society pass through childhood

'drenched in the dark blood-poetry of a religion whose adherents [draw] joy from the prospect of the imminent end of the world'" (133). The Witnesses' literature helps to create a terministic screen through which children can view the world and gives children a language to fuel their imagination with imagery of devastation (see figure 7). Such symbolism contributes to their willful removal from (and fear of) Satan's world.



Figure 7. The Way the Witnesses Depict the Current World.

Source: You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth. Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989. 151.

Nevertheless, the Witnesses must enter Satan's world to save people from it. Sprague argues that proselytizing ". . . cannot be confined to an isolated community, but must imply interaction with outsiders and an interest in them - albeit an interest of a special kind" (119). When around Witnesses, one finds a cordial and happy group of people. In fact, the Witnesses present themselves as some of the happiest people one could ever meet. Even their literature illustrates this "happiness." Figure 8 shows how their literature emphasizes happiness tied to the Witness identity. Graphically, the colorless image contributes to the sadness, while the full color image elevates the liveliness of the Witness identity.



Figure 8. Witness Imagery Depicting the Emotional State of the World and the Emotional State of Being a Witness.

Source: The Watchtower. Brooklyn: The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1 Oct. 1999. 6-7.

Upon interacting with Witnesses, one may perceive this group as consisting of a loving and happy people. Despite this demeanor and expression of kindness towards outsiders, the Witnesses are all keenly aware of one's "worldly" status and are instructed to shun a person if he or she decides not to join. When Witnesses identify a person as being of Satan's world, they then shun a version of Satan, not an average person. The Witnesses heavily discourage casual interaction with outsiders. Parents are instructed to isolate children from "the world." The following

Watchtower article instructs parents to “. . .not encourage or allow their sons and daughters to isolate themselves with their own entertainment, friends, ideas, or imaginations. A family needs to do things together. . .” (1 Mar 1975: 155-6). The Witnesses also discourage children from pursuing higher education and especially from going away to school. The Watchtower encourages that children take up proselytizing as their desired career choice, thus rendering useless higher education for career purposes (1 Oct 2005: 30). Witnesses want to ensure that both their immediate and spiritual families remain linked and that all members of a family participate in the action component (proselytizing) that enables them to live and be their belief.

To maintain group and family cohesiveness, the world must be identified as and symbolize an “unpleasant” and “alien place” (Botting and Botting 118). “The world’s” stigmatizing opinion of Witnesses reinforces these notions. The Witnesses cite instances where the media refers to them as a cult group and where Witnesses have been jailed and attacked simply for their beliefs. Botting and Botting explain that Witnesses do not hesitate to mention that “all over the continent [they] were beaten, whipped, tarred and

feathered, imprisoned, and even blinded in mob attacks. .
." (Botting and Botting 40).

The Witnesses have suffered a worldly persecution; however, they do not lament such persecution. Instead, they liken such persecution to the persecution that Jesus experienced. The Watchtower states, "[God] knows that, just as Jesus was persecuted, so his followers will be. He realizes that the 'trials' will not go on forever. They have a beginning, and they come to an end" (1 Jan 1975: 22). This reference to Jesus helps to form a relationship between Jesus' identity/experience and the Witness identity/experience. Such a relationship between Jesus' experience and the Witnesses' experience reinforces the perceived validity of the Witnesses' beliefs. Further, because they believe Jehovah does not want them to suffer forever, worldly opposition and persecution are thought to evidence the existence of Satan and the need for an imminent end to Satan's world. Contending with opposition reinforces for children, and Witnesses as a whole, the need to seek companionship, thus security, only within the Witness community (Botting and Botting 118).

Even when one shows great promise to become a Witness, Witness literature still advises that one exercise caution

when dealing with a non-Witness. The Watchtower explains, "A word of caution though: A Bible student may be progressing rapidly but may still have some unchristian ways to overcome. Proper Christian boundaries should be maintained. - 1 Corinthians 15:33" (15 Mar 1999: 13). Caution must be exercised when associating with anyone still involved in Satan's world. Satan's world must be thoroughly rejected.

The following excerpt from The Watchtower explains the separation one experiences when accepting Witness beliefs. The authors write, "When we first learned the truth, we showed a willingness to let Jehovah shape us. We quit worldly ways, began to put on the new personality, and became dedicated and baptized Christians" (WT 1 Feb 1999: 13). Within such language, one can see that the Witnesses perceive the acceptance of their belief system as a transformation in their personality. Their personality is integral to their identity. In essence, they become a symbol for their beliefs. The Witnesses' own literature acknowledges this symbolism, as in the following, "If we want to survive Armageddon, we must remain spiritually alert and keep the symbolic garments that identify us as faithful witnesses of Jehovah God" (1 Dec 1999: 18). When

their literature acknowledges that they gain a new personality, a sense of division results. They no longer represent Satan and Satan's world and will be recognizable to Jehovah upon the arrival of the apocalypse.

Though division occurs, by interacting with outsiders, Witnesses win converts. They advertise this increase in membership as a symbol of success and as a symbol that validates the Truth of Jehovah's divine plan. The Watchtower emphasizes this point, arguing that at the time of World War I, only a few thousand members identified themselves as worshippers of Jehovah, which has increased to more than two million. Such growth provides ". . . additional proof that we must be living in significant times as regards the outworkings of Jehovah's marvelous purpose for mankind" (1 Feb 1975: 86). Again, this growth becomes a symbol that encourages the proselytizing behavior since it is met with success. Similarly, rejection of the message becomes as much proof for Jehovah's plan as success. Both represent visible manifestations of what Witnesses perceive to be evidence of God's plan in motion.

Paradise on Earth: Unity

While the Witnesses devote much of their literature and graphics to symbolically divide themselves from Satan's world, the rhetoric of identification still dominates Witness rhetoric because their ultimate goal is group unity and unified thinking. Their desire for unity is so strong that they refer to their goal as "unity at all costs" (Botting and Botting xxvii, 68). Since Burke argues that language derives from and perpetuates the culture in which it is used, the Witness emphasis on unified thinking functions to perpetuate this goal, and ultimately, the Witnesses end up living and being their goal. The Watchtower cites the apostle Paul, who spoke to the first century Christians about unity. They quote Paul as saying, "' . . .you should all speak in agreement, and that there should not be divisions among you, but that you may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought'" (WT 15 Mar 1975: 166). Interestingly, they feel a unity with the first Christians and use Paul as though he speaks directly to them all as one unified group. Paul's message is the message of the Witnesses: unite.

With their focus on unity, independent thought is discouraged within the Witness belief system. The

Watchtower states that "Thinking too much of one's own opinion could lead one to speak of one's own ideas and achievements beyond what the Scriptures allow. - 2 Cor. 10:12, 18" (1 Aug 1975: 474). Discouraging members from thinking for themselves limits opportunities for one to explore other lines of thought. Instead, the Witnesses teach that thinking for the self symbolically ties with Genesis and Satan's temptation for Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, especially since Satan tells Eve she can decide for herself what is good and bad (Botting and Botting 92). When Eve did think for herself, the end result was expulsion from paradise. The Witnesses believe the same will result if they behave similarly.

The Witnesses' goal to unify ties to Burke's argument that everyone strives to achieve cooperative communication. This goal symbolizes a form of paradise. The Witnesses centralize this goal in their rhetoric, writing "All humanity will gradually become one race as they attain perfection, and all mankind will speak one language - antediluvian Hebrew" (Botting and Botting 234). Division within the Witness group represents Satan's work, while unity represents what the Witnesses believe was God's original purpose.

Ironically, the Witnesses do not encourage that their literature all be written in antediluvian Hebrew or any one language for that matter. Instead, they pride themselves on publishing in multiple languages so that they can unite internationally. Though there are language differences, they do not perceive racial differences. They write, "There are no racial, social and economic barriers in the congregation; all therein are 'brothers' and 'sisters.'" (Matt. 23:8)" (WT 15 Feb 1975: 123). As such, Witnesses symbolize a unity that transcends physical boundaries on earth, which helps foster the idea that they are already working to establish a spiritual paradise on earth (WT 15 Feb 1975: 83). The following from The Watchtower demonstrates this concept. It states "In almost any direction that we travel. . .there is not a city where the Witnesses live that we would not be warmly welcomed to stop overnight and have a home in which to stay" (1 Apr 1975: 207). On the surface it appears that Witnesses have the kind of social relationship that allows any of them into each others' homes builds a kind of comfort that many other groups do not experience; however, as the saying "unity at all costs" suggests, achieving unity comes with costs for the Witnesses as they prepare for the apocalypse.

Chapter 4 will provide information on what costs the Witnesses incur to prepare themselves for the arrival of the apocalypse – even believing that their actions may usher in the apocalypse. Chapter 4 will emphasize the identification that Witnesses' apocalyptic rhetoric fosters between the events of the world and their lived experience, focusing on elements such as morality, evil, and time. Such identifications further solidify their group's apocalyptic identity, despite the existence of multiple failed prophecies.

CHAPTER FOUR
A BURKEAN ANALYSIS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESS
APOCALYPTIC RHETORIC AND IMAGERY

Choosing Sides in the Apocalyptic War

Though apocalyptic rhetoric functions as a form of identification rhetoric, it also functions as a rhetoric of division. It divides religious groups, with each believing that their apocalyptic interpretations or calculations are solely valid. It divides between good and evil and divides group members when some do not make the preferred moral choices. It also divides phases of time, with the dismal present being differentiated from the hopeful future. The analysis in this chapter focuses on the division that the Witnesses foster between their group and other religious and political (worldly) groups because they feel such division reinforces their own group's identification.

Identification and division share a symbiotic relationship as each requires and results in the other. Apocalyptic rhetoric reinforces this symbiotic relationship. According to Burke, "the very 'global' conditions which call for the greater identification of all

men with one another have at the same time increased the range of human conflict, the incentives to division" (Rhetoric 1333). Division results because negative global conditions often attribute to faulty human religious and political systems, making them incompatible with each other. At the same time, people unite in their stance against these faulty systems. The Witnesses symbolize unification against the human/Satan world.

Burke argues that ". . .millions of cooperative acts go into the preparation for one single destructive act. We refer to that ultimate disease of cooperation: war" [emphasis in original] (1326). It seems logical, then, that the Witnesses portray the apocalypse as a war between God and Satan and use war-based terminology in their literature to describe themselves and end time events. Also, a majority of the Witnesses' fundamental beliefs about this cosmic war relate to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. As the analysis in this chapter will show, symbols of war and government dominate much of the language of this group, and this language both reflects and refracts their group identity as well as the identity of the culture in which they live and from which they derive.

Language of War and Politics

Words like "class," "system," and "government" pervade the Witnesses' language. Understanding Burke's theory on how the language of a group reflects and refracts the culture in which it exists, it seems logical that the Witnesses view World War I as a pivotal event in the move towards apocalypse. World War I bred political ideologies inextricably tied to world governments.

The Witnesses claim that "The horrors of the 20th-century warfare have led many people to recognize the need for a world government. Fear of world war led to the formation of both the League of Nations and the United Nations. (Revelation 13:14)" (WT 15 Aug 1999: 22). The establishment of the League of Nations in 1918 marks another world event as evidence of the current enactment of Revelation according to Witnesses. Interestingly, the above quotation only mentions secular world events; yet, these secular events are presented as though Revelation specifically contains them with the accompanying Bible citation.

The Witnesses see the establishment of the League of Nations as a political expression of humanity preferring human rule to the rule of God and his son. They maintain

that the League of Nations represents the "disgusting thing" that will result in desolation as depicted in Revelation (WT 1 May 1975: 274-5). Therefore, the League of Nations gets written into the Bible as one of many events that evidences the impending arrival of the apocalypse. By interpreting the "disgusting thing" as the League of Nations through the Witness terministic screen, it becomes part of their Biblical interpretation. Readers can begin to contextualize world events as Biblical simply through the relationship created between them and the Bible, even though the Bible does not once mention specifically the League of Nations or the United Nations. These human organizations become identified with Biblical prophecy through looking at them with a Biblically based and directed focus. All subsequent events can then be viewed as a chronological unraveling of God's purpose.

Additionally, the Witnesses pit their hierarchy and order against that which exists on earth in secular realms, while fashioning, ironically, their organization after human understandings of government and rule. For instance, early Witnesses elected their elders, but this election process changed with the establishment of the office of the service director. According to the group's language, "The

service director was not elected by the congregation but was appointed theocratically to his position by the branch office of God's people" (WT 15 Feb 2006:26-7). Using Burkean analysis, one can see the emphasis of the human structure of government with the reference to "the branch office." Further, the Witnesses refer to the elect members of its group as "Jehovah's ambassadors" whose task will be ". . .to prepare the world for the coming of the true government - Jehovah's government" (Schur 102). Such language seems strongly political and, in a sense, combines the political with the religious using a human government model. Such language reinforces the idea that humans live their reality through their human language and understanding. Not being of the supernatural realm, humans can only depict it based on their own reality.

In fact, according the Witnesses, the apocalypse will destroy earthly kingdoms and governments leaving only Jehovah's theocratic organization. According to Morris J. Schur, "The society. . .strongly predicts the eventual downfall of all earthly governments" (101). Additional interpretations reinforce this prediction, such as "Out of the sea came four fearsome beasts symbolizing human governments, which are unable to satisfy the real needs of

humankind" (WT 15 Sep 2002: 6). Again, the interpretation provided ties current lived experience with prophetic symbols - symbols that could be interpreted as anything (especially based on Thatcher's argument about the function of the empty metaphor referenced in Chapter 2). Biblical symbols exert power because they apply widely to one's lived experience and culture. Such symbols possess enough specificity to form an image, while remaining general enough for interpretation according to the group's vernacular and terministic screens.

Witnesses further use such interpretations to form the ultimate identification - to identify Satan with the world and its governments. In fact, to salute the flag of a nation equates with saluting the Devil as the unseen god of that nation (Sprague 116). Flags comprise satanic symbols and methods of earthly, thus, satanic worship. Not only do Witnesses respond to such symbols negatively, but also their refusal to accept political symbols helps them identify with their own organization and its God-related symbols (the Bible and derivative texts).

Burke offers an explanation for why such God-related symbols function effectively only in relation to lived, secular experience. According to Burke:

language is empirically confined to terms referring to physical nature. . . socio-political relationships and terms describing language itself. Hence, all the words for "God" must be used analogically - as we were to speak of God's "powerful arm" (a physical analogy), or of God as "lord" or "father" (a socio-political analogy) or of God as the "word" (a linguistic analogy) (Religion 15).

The Witnesses make strong use of the socio-political, which makes the divine accessible, thus, plausible to them. Ingeniously, the Witnesses capitalize upon the socio-political culture in which they live. Such a move identifies God and his government with one they actually already live in (a concept tied to Burke's observations about the role of pre-accepted symbols of authority in identification rhetoric). Such identifications evade any obvious persuasive intent, making acceptance of the ideology appear rational and the turn towards a divine government seamless. According to Botting and Botting, "Jehovah's Witnesses regard Jehovah [as the apex of their organizational pyramid] and have even incorporated him into organizational charts" (xxxi). Figure 9 provides an

illustration in The Watchtower that shows how Witnesses depict Jehovah at the top of their organization in a governmental hierarchical fashion.

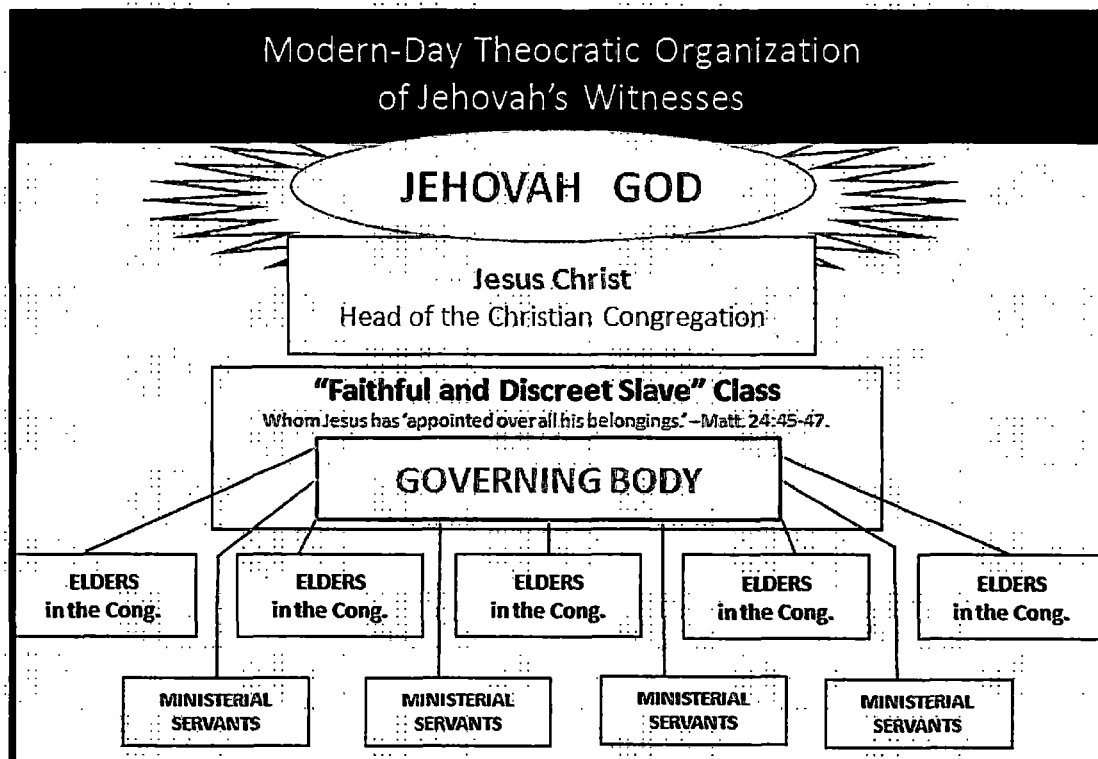


Figure 9. The Witness Hierarchy.

Source: The Watchtower. Brooklyn: The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1 Oct. 1999. 17.

This illustration ties to both corporate and governmental "org charts," while also reinforcing ideas about hierarchy and order. Eddy writes, "A study of the Witnesses reveals a people who have made a virtue of system

and order" (119). Eddy also explains that when listening to a Witness, one can observe the ". . .systematic way in which he presents his case. His approach is one of order" and ideas are provided in a "systematic progression" (119). Burke's theory about the relationship between order, hierarchy, and identification rhetoric reflect Eddy's statements and evidence further that Witnesses make use of identification rhetoric. Such system and order contributes to the move towards cooperative communication, with everyone in their established place along the hierarchy. Systematic structures provide a sense of security when contrasted with disorder or chaos.

Though Witnesses accept their structured, hierarchical government, they present God's government as different from human governments. They present God's government as the solution to the flaws and frustrations born out of human governments. Portrayals of violence and war evidence such flaws and provide a motive for the arrival of the apocalypse. According to The Watchtower, "The Devil, who is called 'the ruler of this world' and 'the god of this system of things,' stirred up the nations to go into global warfare" (15 Jun 1975: 362). In fact, Botting and Botting argue that Witnesses "are kept constantly in a

psychological state of war. Hence, people who 'fall away from the Truth' are called 'battle casualties' or 'prisoners of war,' the world is called 'the enemy against which the Witnesses must fight the good fight'. . . (176). The Witnesses even write of themselves that "Far from lulling people to sleep with sweet sounding platitudes about peace, they diligently strive to awaken them to the reality that today is a time for war" (WT 1 Oct 1999: 14).

Ultimately, all human-inspired war symbolizes Satan at work; therefore, the concrete entity "war" becomes motivated by a supernatural (abstract) entity. O'Leary suggests that apocalyptic rhetoric provides "a rhetorical solution to the problem of evil that operates on both a rational and mythic level" (195). If evil is symbolic and supernatural, one needs a symbolic, supernatural way to deal with it; thus, when Witnesses pray to God, they often pray for his kingdom to arrive with the destructive force required to eradicate human governments (WT 1 May 1975: 261). In keeping with war-based terminology, the Witnesses refer to themselves as a united army. Raymond Franz, President of the Witnesses from 1971 to 1980, explained, "'You must understand we must have unity, we cannot have disunity, with a lot of people going every way; an army is

supposed to march in step'" (qtd. in Botting and Botting 67). Such a call for unity evidences the Witnesses' strong need for group identification. Their focus on the apocalypse and its being a cosmic war between God and Satan contributes further to the call to identify and unite. As such, they also describe Jehovah in similar war-based language. For example, they write, "'Like a mighty man Jehovah himself will go forth. Like a warrior he will awaken our zeal. He will shout, yes, he will let out a war cry. . ." Isaiah 42:13" [emphasis in original] (WT 1 Oct 1999: 14).

According to Meeks, "The language of the apocalypse unmask[s] the demonic potency of ordinary power" and "The two grand clusters of images that gather in the latter chapters of the Apocalypse are images of war and judgment" (467). Ideas of war and judgment motivate unity to win the war. The Witnesses achieve unity through the proper conduct of oneself to avoid becoming a battle casualty.

Recruiting for the Divine Army

The birth of wars as a result of imperfect human sociopolitical entities provides the motive for the apocalypse and also provides the motive for the Witnesses

to perpetuate themselves as an apocalyptically-focused group. The constant focus on war and the actual occurrence of wars consistently renews the notion that what Witnesses believe must be true. If what the Witnesses believe is true, then certainly others must have exposure to it so that they may have an opportunity to embrace it and enjoy salvation; therefore, the motive to recruit additional members is born. Such recruiting is called proselytizing, and the Witnesses make proselytizing a fundamental group behavior.

According to Botting and Botting, the Witnesses' "primary focus is its publication work; indeed, its adherents call each other 'publishers' and preaching consists primarily of placing publications with members of the public" (xxxiv). Such a focus on proselytizing defines the Witnesses as a textual group and binds their lives and actions to the texts that they read and distribute. This proselytizing behavior evidences Burke's claim about the move towards ideal cooperation, which he argues can be attained ". . . through the efforts of propagandizing, education, and suasion," which are all functions of the speaker or writer in a given society (Holland 11). In terms of religion, Burke argues that "One learns the faith.

. .through being told (ex auditu)" (Religion 12). The Witnesses capitalize upon telling and teaching their apocalyptic beliefs through their proselytizing efforts.

Ingeniously, the Witnesses perpetuate the motive to act (proselytize) by creating a relationship between the apocalypse and the act of proselytizing. The Watchtower states, "Recall the connection Jesus made between 'the end' and the work Christians need to do: 'This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth. . .and then the end will come' (Matthew 24:14)" (1 May 1999: 23). This statement accomplishes two forms of identification. First, it binds proselytizing to the inevitability of "the end," which, therefore, contributes to the reality of "the end." Second, it identifies Witnesses with Jesus in their imitation of Jesus' preaching the good news. Such identification helps to remove the Witness and replaces him or her with the idea of Jesus, making Witnesses and Jesus consubstantial. This identification expands by identifying Jesus' teaching methods with Witness teaching methods. Consider the following from The Watchtower: "Following Jesus' example, we rely heavily on the Bible in our preaching and teaching" and ". . .do not simply base our answers on our own ideas" (15 Aug 2002: 17-8). Both types

of identifications ensure that "the end" will happen and that this concept does not originate with the Witnesses. They simply agree with it and identify with it.

Internal Audience

That Witnesses agree with the perceived divine ideas they espouse leads not only to identification, but also to action. Proselytizing symbolizes action. Proselytizing evidences a successful cycle of persuasion because it persuades one to persuade others. In so doing, one continues to persuade oneself by making arguments for the belief using the persuasive material. The Watchtower even states that studying the Word of God functions to ". . . equip yourself to teach others - your loved ones, acquaintances, and even those whom you may not yet know. Doing this is not optional for true Christians" (15 June 2002: 17). The text that the Witnesses must read and distribute manifests the desire to both read it and distribute it to perpetuate the group and its beliefs. Such behavior manifests an inward persuasion and sends the message that true Christians proselytize and true Christians are those who survive the apocalypse.

Continually arguing for one's beliefs serves as an act of persuasion for the self and ties to Burke's "self-as-

audience" concept in the rhetoric of identification.

O'Leary supports this assertion, arguing that apocalyptic arguments eventually shift from persuasion to enactment (205-6); however, I maintain (in agreement with Burke) that enactment comprises a form of persuasion. Enactment ties to Burke's "act." Enactment represents how the symbol user becomes simultaneously a symbol responder. Proselytizing represents enactment and serves as an example of Burke's primary assertion: that language induces cooperative acts among language users. Such acts function both for an external and internal audience.

Witnesses focus on how many in their group proselytize and for how many hours. Witnesses must report how many hours they spend doing preaching work and how many publications they place, which leads to an obsession with statistics (Botting and Botting 52). These statistics are then published for all to see. For example, The Watchtower reports:

During the past year [Witnesses] placed
27,581,852 bound books, 12,409,287 booklets and
273,238,018 magazines with interested persons to
further such Bible education. Additionally, they

obtained 2,387,904 subscriptions for the

Watchtower and Awake! Magazines. (1 Jan 1975: 27)

These statistics represent an objective way to show the group's success via and its proselytizing efforts. The Witnesses consider such statistics trustworthy because even "bad news" or declining membership and publication numbers get reported (Wah 166). Interestingly, such "bad news" does not render the organization faulty; rather, this "bad news" works to divide true believers from "goats," or non-believers.

The Watchtower even encourages Witnesses to give up what they consider to be secular life interests in support of publishing and preaching as stated in the following:

To aid fellow humans to learn about Jehovah and his marvelous purpose for mankind, a considerable number have given up promising careers, divested themselves of lucrative business interests, sold material possessions...or in other ways adjusted their circumstances. . . . then there are those who chose singleness or, as married people, decided to forgo the joy of having children in order to make themselves available for service that would otherwise have been difficult to

accomplish. . . . Those who made their decision on the basis of deep love for Jehovah God and an earnest desire to aid others have no regrets. (1 May 1975: 283)

Convincing the Witnesses to avoid such "worldly" endeavors also functions to help the Witness remain loyal only to the group, thus minimizing worldly distractions while maximizing the group identity.

Rhetorically, Witnesses who make proselytizing their life's work receive reward in seeing their contribution hours counted. The numbers become a symbol for spiritual strength and justify the energy spent and sacrifices made to continue in the proselytizing work. Botting and Botting write that "Spiritual strength is assessed according to the number of hours spent in proselytizing work and the number of magazines or books placed week to week" (112).

Increasing numbers also represent an increasing number of people who have come to understand Jehovah, and The Watchtower makes statements that indicate their growing group numbers. For instance, The Watchtower states:

. . .those actively serving Jehovah now number over six million in more than 93,000 congregations throughout the earth! Jehovah's

blessing is also seen in that Jehovah's Witnesses publish the most widely distributed Bible-based publications in all history. (1 May 2002: 23)

The Witnesses use these numbers to evidence their spiritual strength and the validity of their belief. Zygmunt writes, "The sect's prophetic declarations [become] public affirmations of faith in the inexorable outworkings of [the Divine Plan]" (942). Since the Witnesses spread Jehovah's message, they participate in realizing it.

Realizing Jehovah's message rhetorically enters Witnesses into a dramatistic relationship with Jehovah. When applying Burke's Pentad to the Witness relationship with Jehovah, proselytizing becomes the act, the Witness becomes the agent performing the act, The Watchtower represents the agency or instrument that the Witness uses to conduct his or her act, and the scene becomes the neighborhood (or the secular world from which they want to escape). All of these components tie to the ultimate purpose, which The Watchtower explains in the following:

Our life has purposeful direction in that it revolves around an enduring relationship with Jehovah God. Truly, dedicated Christians have reason to continue exerting themselves to

maintain the freedom that they have gained by
conforming to God's truth. Is that what you are
doing? [emphasis added]. (15 Jan 1975: 60)

All actions tie back to the purpose explained above and its appearance in the literature that Witnesses must read and spread works to consistently renew the reading and spreading of it. The above passage represents the rhetoric of identification with the use of the words "our" and "truly dedicated Christians," which contrast with the use of the word "you." The question that appears at the end functions to oust the reader if he or she is not exerting himself or herself (via preaching work). For one who desires to belong to the "our," such rhetoric proves effective. Every knock at someone's door indicates the success the effectiveness of the group's rhetoric.

Other statements directed at the reader appear within The Watchtower. For instance:

If you truly love Jehovah, your service to God is not limited by any date. You know that what true Christians possess is worth more than anything this world can offer. You are convinced that Jehovah God will not fail to fulfill the things

that he has promised his servants [emphasis added]. (1 May 1975: 284)

Such a passage seems to tell the reader what he or she thinks and feels, but these statements still function as "if/then." If a Witness is a true Christian and truly loves Jehovah, then he or she will not serve Jehovah only until the apocalypse occurs nor will he or she turn toward the secular world. The Witness will remain steadfast in the group's beliefs and corresponding actions.

While this literature is what Witnesses give to outsiders, it still functions to address the already-established Witness (self-as-audience). Hoffer suggests of groups and their ideology that "Propaganda. . . serves more to justify ourselves than to convince others; and the more reason we have to feel guilty, the more fervent our propaganda" (107). In the above Watchtower passages, the reader's intentions and conduct are called into question for self-evaluation.

Another example of questions aimed at the Witness for self-evaluation follows:

All of us who made a dedication to Jehovah should reflect: Are we truly doing his will everyday of our lives? Or are we still living largely for the

self, with no serious thought about God's will? Though it may call for sacrificing a career and material gains, the pioneer service brings spiritual blessings beyond comparison [emphasis added]. (WT 15 Mar 1975: 185)

Guilt becomes the natural reaction when one does not live up to required standards. As Hoffer suggests, and as such questioning suggests, one must pioneer (proselytize) to evidence his or her devotion to a deity or overarching belief. The Witness feels guilty for not taking proselytizing seriously and must proselytize to avert such feelings. This cycle of guilt will appear later when the chapter addresses the imperative function of morality, especially as related to apocalyptic events, and how morality and guilt play a role in the rhetoric of identification.

External Audience

While much of the Witness literature addresses the Witness, it also instructs Witnesses on how they should approach external audiences so that outsiders may want to identify with and then join the group. Witnesses capitalize upon a non-forceful approach. While some joke about Witnesses knocking on their door and about how

annoying or invasive it is, the Witnesses do not desire to annoy or invade. More than anything, they truly believe that what they preach is truth and love and that everyone needs access to their message. They believe that only deserving humans will recognize the truth of their message; thus, they do not take forceful approaches (though a knock on the door may be considered invasive).

Sprague explains that Witnesses consider the spreading of the Kingdom message their only important duty because such an act allows people to “. . .choose, while there is yet time, to take their stand on the Lord's side, so receiving the gift of everlasting life, or on that of the Devil, so going down in destruction” [emphasis added] (Sprague 110). Only two options exist, and the element of choice, they believe, is paramount. Jehovah only intends to have deserving ones comprise the saved thus, rendering forceful approaches unnecessary.

For instance, The Watchtower states that “. . .forcing the Bible's message upon others by armed might would contradict God's invitation to 'let anyone that wishes take life's water free.' (Revelation 22:17) No forced conversions here!” [emphasis in original] (1 Oct 1999: 11). Another example from The Watchtower states, “Jehovah never

uses his almighty power to make people do things against their will" (1 Apr 1999: 21-2). When Eddy attended Witness meetings, he observed that ". . .they were never insistent that I unite with them. Their mission was done when they told me the good news" (116-7).

World Conditions

The Witnesses do not simply "tell" the good news, however. They follow a certain methodology that attracts an intended audience. Non-forceful approaches work well when they involve pre-accepted ideologies or ideologies that accompany certain rhetorical identifications. For example, non-forceful approaches function well when they tie to real-world conditions, address unhappy people and the possible reasons for their unhappiness, and address those already pre-disposed to religious views who may be unhappy with other organized religions (all of which the apocalypse is believed to solve). According to Hoffer, a group's propaganda:

. . .penetrates only into minds already open, and rather than instill an opinion, it articulates and justifies opinions already present in the minds of its recipients. The gifted propagandist brings to a boil ideas and passions already

simmering in the minds of his hearers. . . .Where opinion is not coerced, people can be made to believe only in what they already "know." (105)

Witnesses demonstrate what Hoffer suggests of groups and their propaganda because their propaganda addresses fundamental human sufferings and fears - concepts familiar to the human existence. Their magazines ask potential converts questions about the way they feel about world conditions. The Watchtower asks:

Do you really want to see a crime-free world? Then you need to take the steps necessary for surviving the approaching elimination of the present system of things. Only in the New Order that follows, in which love of God and love of neighbor will prevail earth wide, can people enjoy life free from all crime. To attain that, make use of your opportunity now to gain the enlightening and life-giving knowledge that God's Word contains. Because they love God and love their neighbor, Jehovah's Witnesses offer their help free of charge. (15 Jan 1975: 38)

Another example from The Watchtower reads "Would you like to live when all threats from poverty are gone? Would you

like sound counsel as to how it might be dealt with now? If so, regularly read this magazine" (1 Feb 1975: 70). Not only do Witnesses ask questions that address concerns that most hold about the state of the world and how it affects (or will affect) people, but also they provide a solution to the problems that their literature highlights. One logically desires an end to suffering, but more importantly, identifying suffering with Satan and human-based governments is key for one to join a group that promises an end to suffering.

To someone overwhelmed with worldly concerns, such questions and solutions identify with one's immediate experience. Moreover, the above presentation gives one the notion of voluntary choice. Such choice-making ties to Burke's rhetoric because he argues that symbol-users respond to symbols through making choices (and when that choice is made, the rhetoric is functioning). Such choices involve deeper, ethical considerations, especially in both apocalyptic and religious rhetoric, as will be shown later in this chapter. Though found prominently in religious rhetoric, apocalyptic rhetoric does not have to relate to the ethical strictures of religion to demand that its audience make ethical choices through certain

identifications. All forms of identification rhetoric (thus apocalyptic rhetoric) treat morality as a central implication.

Unity and Purity

1 Corinthians 5:13 reads "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (NWT). Removing the "wicked man" ensures that he will not taint the group; thus, it remains in the group's best interest to ensure ongoing unity by eradicating such threats. These threats exist in any moral rebelliousness (an example of which could be independent thought) because such rebelliousness invites the opportunity for disorder and a breakdown of the group's cohesiveness. As a result, certain behaviors that could threaten the group's existence get written into the group's moral code. The Witnesses argue that walking in Jehovah's way demands loyalty, faith, and obedience (WT 15 May 1999: 14). Such a belief ties directly to Hoffer's observation about group cohesion. He writes, "All mass movements rank obedience with the highest virtues and put it on a level with faith. . . ." (117). Pairing obedience with faith or obedience with unity makes them consubstantial principles. They cannot exist in the mind of the believer as separate.

Burke's commentary on order ties to the relationship between morality and unity. He writes:

If, by "Order," we have in mind the idea of a command, then obviously the corresponding words for the proper response would be "Obey." Or, there would be the alternative, "Disobey." Thus, we have the proportion: Order is to Disorder as Obedience is to Disobedience. (Religion 186)

As Burke explains, order and obedience share a reciprocal relationship and their pairing results in unity. Morality and order tie to the rhetoric of identification because successful identification requires cooperation (order). To maintain cooperation and order, one must live according to the ethics of the group he or she identifies with.

Though the desire for order is assumed universal, the fact remains that disorder is possible. Burke explains that "'evil' is implicit in the idea of 'Order' because 'Order' is a polar, or dialectical term, implying an idea of Disorder" (Religion 195). Burke explains further that "Logologically, 'Temptation' is but a tautological aspect of the idea of 'Order.'" It is grounded in the idea of a verbal command, which by its very nature contains the possibilities of both obedience and disobedience" (Religion

194). Burke argues that language introduces the opportunity for commands and morality. Symbol-users can respond to commands via making choices, especially because "the word-using animal not only understands a thou-shalt-not; it can carry the principle of the negative a step further, and answer the thou-shalt-not with a disobedient NO" (Burke Religion 186-7). As discussed in Chapter 1, the rhetoric of identification motivates action or living one's identity and part of that action is making a choice. The kind of choice made ties to ethics and either a turn toward identification/cooperation/order or toward disobedience/disorder/consequence.

The Witnesses capitalize upon the relationship between morality and order not only to achieve unity, but also to focus on good and evil. If the possibility for evil or wrongdoing did not exist, the need for an apocalyptic cleansing would not exist; therefore, the apocalypse ties with both temporality and ethics (O'Leary 219). McMurry agrees, writing that ". . .apocalyptic rhetoric is always an invocation of power: do thus and so, or else suffer the consequences" (30). Consequences exist inevitably with the presence of moral codes. Human beings are imperfect; however, some transgressions are considered greater than

others'. In a sense, the Witnesses benefit from minor moral failings and the need for moral guidance because of the intrinsic relationship between guilt and morality.

Morality creates the opportunity for guilt because, as Burke argues, only the law can make sin (Religion 186). If morality did not exist, temptation, sin, or guilt could not exist. Such guilt drives one, ironically, back to the source of the guilt for cleansing purposes. For example, the Witnesses write, "Even if we feel unworthy because of guilt, we should turn to God in earnest supplication" (WT 15 Jan 1999: 19). A turn toward God means a return to his law.

Group morality forms a cycle of guilt and repentance. As a result, the Witness literature provides spiritual guidance and rules, which then introduces the opportunity to fail; yet, the literature also requires a return to it upon such failure. The Witnesses explain, "We can, in the light of God's Word, reprove ourselves or, if needed, be reprovved by loving shepherds in the congregation" (WT 1 Mar 2002: 12). One cannot escape from the cycle unless the transgression is so great that the congregation decides to remove the transgressor to eradicate threats to the group

and its unity. The removal of a Witness is referred to as "disfellowshipping."

Botting and Botting explain that disfellowshipping is "a form of social and spiritual ostracism" (90). Since the Witnesses discourage association with members outside of their group, if a member ends up disfellowshipped, they lose all connections to family, friends, and even employers. They suffer true isolation. Any who choose to associate with a disfellowshipped member, even if that member is a part of the immediate family, could also suffer the same consequence (Botting and Botting 91). In essence, disfellowshipping symbolizes the isolation and annihilation meant as consequences for those in Satan's organization during the apocalypse. Disfellowshipping seems an appropriate consequence for a group that uses the rhetoric of identification to foster and maintain its own existence. Stripping one of his or her group identity becomes a real threat and, consequently, a motivation to stay away from that threat.

Grounds for Removal

The Witnesses impose several restrictions and expectations upon themselves, all of which they believe are Biblically-based. Some of these restrictions and

expectations include following strict rules for sexual conduct and avoiding smoking, drugs (alcohol in moderation is okay), and blood transfusions. Witnesses must not celebrate birthdays or holidays (these are pagan-based) or vote, hold political office, salute the flag, or serve in the military (these actions symbolize an allegiance to Satan). Witnesses are also heavily discouraged from attending college and they must not associate with those who are disfellowshipped or face being disfellowshipped themselves (Bader 128-9).

Of most interest, however, is their moralizing of any disappointment regarding failed apocalyptic prophecies. The last predicted year for the arrival of the apocalypse was 1975. In 1976, The Watchtower suggested that:

. . .any who were "disappointed" by the non-arrival of Armageddon "should now concentrate on adjusting his viewpoint, seeing that it was not the word of God that failed or deceived him and brought disappointment, but that his own understanding was based on wrong premises." (qtd. in Botting and Botting 48)

It is surprising that the Jehovah's Witnesses and The Watchtower continued to exist after 1975; however, what is

most surprising is how Witnesses were blamed for the failure and still decided to remain in the group (and theories on this will be discussed in Chapter 5). The continued existence and growth of such a group evidences the power and influence of identification rhetoric.

Further, Botting and Botting explain that, following the failure of the 1975 prophecy, moral standards became even more rigid, and members who could not adhere to such standards, or who demonstrated a lack of faith in The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society as the "voice of God," were purged from the group, resulting in the disfellowshipping of approximately 30,000 people (48). Though the Witnesses lost many members during this timeframe, it makes sense that the group would experience such a cleansing because such measures removed any sign of dissidence or weakness within the group. Removing weakness only functions to strengthen the group's potential for undying unity. Those members that survived the rigid standards and who clearly wanted to remain faithful to the group (despite the failed prophecy) would likely stick with the group indefinitely. Such dedication guarantees the group's existence and continued growth over time. (The

measure worked as the Witnesses numbers are the highest they have ever been.)

Punishment must remain a constant possibility for Witnesses to keep them in the group. The Watchtower warns, "Yet even though true Christians have such faith and hope, they cannot allow themselves to lose sight of the fact that, if they are careless, the world's materialistic view can infect them" (15 Jan 1975: 50). One of the most prominent symbols associated with keeping oneself in accordance with group norms is the idea and image of the "watchtower," which is featured in the name of the overall organization, called the Watch Tower and Tract Society. The front and inside covers of The Watchtower feature an image of a watchtower (see Figure 10). The Witnesses emphasize the notion of "watching."



Figure 10. The Design of the Title for The Watchtower.

Source: The Watchtower. Brooklyn: The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1 Oct. 2002, front cover.

Such a symbol serves two purposes. On the inside cover of the 1 January 1975 issue of The Watchtower, the following explanation appears, "A watchtower enables a person to see far into the distance and announce to others what is coming" (1 Jan 1975: n.pag.). While this certainly makes logical sense, and ties directly to the notion of unveiling prophetic events, the watchtower could also subliminally symbolize and suggest being watched.

According to Maier, "[Apocalyptic] literature repeatedly presents humans as spectacles, actors under God's eye whose deepest thoughts and most secret actions are visible to the divine speculator or surveillant" [emphasis in original] (132). Maier's observation speaks to Burke's Pentad, placing the Witnesses as actors within the drama of Jehovah's divine plan, except these actors' actions are transparent to Jehovah's watchful eye. Within an apocalyptic frame, such watchfulness becomes necessary because a relationship between prophecy and morality exists. This relationship exists because the apocalypse confronts the problem of evil. If one believes in the real possibility for the apocalypse, then he or she must also acknowledge the possibility that his or her acts will be

judged. The Watchtower supports this assertion with the following text:

" . . . what sort of persons ought you be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah. . . Since you are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace. . . . Cultivate godly devotion, and be among the millions who choose to survive the end of this world into the peaceful world to come" [emphasis added]. (1 Mar 2002: 7)

The rhetoric presents the opportunity to choose certain behaviors over others and with the impetus to choose devotion to the group and its moral mandates. Hoffer, in his observations about the formation and maintenance of faith-based groups, notes that the faithful will continually strive to adhere to the group's moral behaviors because there is an assumption of being continually watched (124); therefore, group identity formation and solidification occurs not only because of faith, but also because of the performance of behaviors that correspond to said faith. Such performance ties to Burke's

identification rhetoric because the Witnesses maintain their identity via choices they make.

If any other reminders about punishment were needed, the following would summarize the kind of reinforcement that appears in Witness literature about what happens to those who are not in the Truth:

A flesh-eating plague will destroy many. Says Jehovah: "Their flesh shall rot while they are still on their feet, their eyes shall rot in their sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their mouths. . . .Eaten up will be the tongues of those who scoffed and laughed at the warning of Armageddon! Eaten up will be the flesh of those who would not learn that the living and true God is named Jehovah!. . . .To all surviving flesh the dead bodies will be disgusting, hateful things. Worms will not stop swarming over the millions of bodies until the last body is eaten up. (qtd. in Botting and Botting 123)

The image suggests a terrifying and painful consequence for those who do not belong in the group. Much of the description refers to the physical as opposed to the spiritual. The physical references help to symbolize a

tangible pain. This tangibility makes pain and the words that describe it an accessible symbol. Burke explains that the imagination shares a close connection with sensory images, making it highly responsive to such images (Religion 188). In effect, though the quotation does not accompany a pictorial image, the sensory references allow the reader to experience the pain mentally so that they will want to avoid experiencing it physically.

In fact, in apocalyptic literature, "the audience. . . gazes upon itself. Visions of torment and suffering are close at hand to depict a performance of self that the reader need never play" (Maier 152). In the above example, the reader gets to experience the annihilation, symbolically, via the imagination. If the imagination can conceive of the possibility, one may be motivated to avoid behaviors that could lead to the actual experience. Avoiding certain behaviors, while perpetuating others speaks to the choice-making obedience associated with apocalyptic (and identification) rhetoric.

Even further, the actual images used within The Watchtower also help to symbolize the future scene and its associated rewards and punishments. The images, without any textual support, express clearly which side one should

choose prior to the arrival of the apocalypse. O'Leary suggests that "While the actual Armageddon event has yet to take place, pictorial representations and vivid, colorful language help to consistently realize it in discourse" (144). The vivid, colorful language taps into the imagination, which has the ability to conceive of events as presented. Figure 11 illustrates the terrible punishment that awaits those of Satan's world, which contrasts with depictions of paradise. Though the image contains no motion, the imagination has no trouble envisioning the events being carried out. Where images of terror and torture are present, images of bliss and paradise also exist (see Figure 12).



Figure 11. Punishment for

Acts of War and Violence.

Source: The Watchtower.

Brooklyn: The Watch Tower

Bible and Tract Society, 1

Jun. 1999. 6.



Figure 12. Happiness and Peace as Reward.

Source: You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth. Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989. 156

The Darkest of Days

While severe consequences result when failing to comply with group mandates, either via disfellowshipping or annihilation during the apocalypse (i.e. removal of one's

identity), Witnesses also learn about great rewards for making certain obedient sacrifices in their lives. These rewards make worthwhile such sacrifices. Burke explains the integral relationship between reward and obedience, writing, “. . .with Obedience goes promise of reward (as payment for service), while on the other side goes Disobedience, with the threat of punishment as enforced payment for disservice” (Religion 191). As Burke alludes, obedience and sacrifice must come before even just the promise of reward; however, if the world is perceived to be so destitute and depraved, the actions necessary to escape it become desirable.

Two aspects exist to keep Witnesses focused on the rewards promised to them (which will be explained later in this chapter). The first aspect pertains to the actual suffering one experiences in the real world. This real experience represents the tangible evidence for evil and the need for an apocalyptic cleansing. This tangible real world evidence fills Thatcher's concept of the “empty metaphor” referenced in Chapter 2. As noted in Chapter 2, apocalyptic rhetoric contains an empty metaphor feature, which allows one to interpret overarching apocalyptic symbols in ways specific to his or her actual lived

experience. Such interpretations make apocalyptic symbols applicable to one's specific experience and beliefs.

The Watchtower provides many examples that show how their rhetoric identifies world conditions with prophetic claims made in the Bible. Such a combination solidifies, for the symbol-user, the connection between the events prophesied to happen and the events currently happening. For instance, The Watchtower cites the secular New York Times in one of its articles. The citation reads, "For many poor people the price of a single meal now exceeds a day's income" [emphasis in original] (qtd. in WT 1 Jan 1975: 3). The Watchtower then goes on to interpret this evidence through the Witness terministic screen, writing:

This condition is a striking fulfillment of Bible prophecies regarding our time, one of which foretold: "A whole day's wage for a loaf of bread." (Rev. 6:6, Weymouth). High prices, food shortages, disease epidemics, world wars and other unprecedented troubles in our generation were prophesied to result from the ride of the "horsemen of the apocalypse," all identifying our time as the foretold "last days" - Rev. Chap. 6; 2 Tim. 3:1-5. (1 Jan 1975: 3)

The rhetoric identifies, first, a secular source of information - the New York Times - a source of information that would seem unbiased because it does not derive from spiritual sources. It is merely a "matter of fact"; however, the Witnesses form a connection between this "matter of fact" and what the Bible says. This connection then forms a literal translation between the hunger cited in the Times and the hunger cited in the Bible verse. From this point, they can then advance their even larger claims (assuming that the premise of the former claims was accepted), wrapping all real world troubles in with the horsemen of the apocalypse.

The rhetorical effectiveness of using secular sources combined with biblical prophecy does not lie in their ". . . argumentative validity, but in their ability to subsume evidence and authoritative testimony from secular sources into a religious perspective" (O'Leary 167). In essence, the rhetoric of identification allows for the combination of secular and sacred sources so that they become consubstantial - one becomes equally valid with the other and in so doing, each advances the claims of the other. Perhaps the "fact" that food shortages exist could suggest a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. This study acknowledges

the possibility for such a connection, but intends only to show that the linkage exists and that this linkage (achieved via the principles of identification) helps to advance larger spiritual claims.

The technique of using real world disasters to justify Biblical prophecy pervades much of Witness literature. Witnesses rely heavily upon the text of Matthew 24 to prompt the explanation of "signs" that symbolize the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Matthew 24:3 reads:

While [Jesus] was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately saying: "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (NWT).

Jesus' reply to the question contains many signs traditionally associated with the apocalypse, such as wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, and famine (O'Leary 149). With Matthew 24 being a focus, there is always an opportunity to ask the question about the "signs" and then to address them.

Though history is rife with wars, earthquakes, and famine (spanning all time), the Witnesses maintain that any disasters that have occurred or that are occurring,

particularly since 1914 (World War I), evidence the impending arrival of the apocalypse. The following sampling of their literature emphasizes the significance of the 1914 date and the significance of real world events that evidence, for Witnesses, the impending apocalypse. In most of the following examples, The Watchtower points out a real-world disaster, italicizes the related Biblical significance, and provides the specific Bible reference:

- 1) According to one source, earthquakes with the power to ruin buildings and split open the ground have averaged 18 per year since 1914.
"Earthquakes" (Matthew 24:7). (1 Oct 2005: 6)
- 2) Hunger hit Europe during the first world war, and famine has haunted mankind ever since.
"There will be food shortages" (Matthew 24:7). (1 Oct 2005: 5)
- 3) World War I forced irreversible changes on human society and thrust mankind into the last days of this system of things. "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:7). (1 Oct 2005: 5)
- 4) . . .untold numbers have been stricken by such diseases as malaria, small pox,

tuberculosis, polio, and cholera. And the world looks on aghast as AIDS spreads unabated. "In one place after another pestilences" (Luke 21:11). (1 Oct 2005: 5)

5) Especially since World War I, mankind has experienced appalling changes. It has seen the earth drenched with the blood of millions. Warfare, genocide, terrorism, crime, and lawlessness have erupted worldwide. Famine, disease, and immorality have stalked our globe. All the evidence indicates that we now live among the wicked generation. . . (1 Jun 1999: 6-7)

6) As foretold by Jesus, the "good news of the kingdom" is being preached (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). (1 Feb 1975: 84)

These provide a few examples of how the Witnesses view the world and see it coming to an apocalyptic end. These connections illustrate the Witnesses' ability to insert their lived experience (and culture) into a rhetorical frame (in this case, an apocalyptic frame), taking the empirical reality and making it not only supernatural, but also making the supernatural possible by association. Even more important, as noted in the sixth quotation above, the

Witnesses not only observe what happens around them, but also they include their own behavior (proselytizing) as evidence for the impending apocalypse. They insert themselves into the frame as a component that will lead to their prophecies (literally a self-fulfilling prophecy).

A second aspect to using the world's current state to advance their apocalyptic claims is the Witnesses' manufacture of how real world suffering evidences the impending apocalypse. For example, The Watchtower instructs Witnesses on how to proselytize most effectively by identifying a potential convert's life with their message. The Watchtower advises:

When preaching from house to house, we can use questions to arouse interest. . . .How can we choose a question that is tailored to the interests of the household? Be observant. When approaching a house, look at the surroundings. Are there toys in the yard, indicating that there are children in the home? If so, we might ask, 'Have you ever wondered what the world will be like when your children grow up?' (Psalm 37:10, 11) Are there a number of locks on the front door, or is there a security system? We could

ask: "Do you think the time will ever come when people like you and me can feel safe in our home and on the street?" (Micah 4:3, 4) Is there a ramp for wheelchair access? We might ask: "Will there ever be a time where everyone living will enjoy good health?" (Isaiah 33:24) [emphasis added]. (1 Sept 2002: 20-1)

The above quotation illustrates how Witnesses must identify the potential convert's life with their message of security and hope. Further, the Witness must establish a personal relationship with the potential convert with the insertion of the phrase "people like you and me." One is not likely to feel manipulated by someone in the same (perceived) destitute position. Finally, Witnesses themselves, by reading this material in The Watchtower, get their own beliefs about the promise of the good life reaffirmed, which speaks to Burke's self-as-audience concept. The Witness does not consider the manipulative quality of such questioning because they agree with, and have answers for, the questions they ask.

Take notice, also, that within the suggested line of questioning, both the Bible and Jehovah are not mentioned. The potential convert needs to first form a relationship

between his or her fears or concerns and the possibility for a resolution to those fears or concerns before the leap to the Bible and Jehovah should be made. This principle operates upon the idea that, even if people are not ready to accept the premise that the Bible is an authority, they may be inclined to accept the premises that time has an end (all people face death) and that evil/pain should be dealt with (in some way) so that they are justified (O'Leary 197).

Most people experience at least some suffering and fear of death, which makes apocalyptic rhetoric (as an aspect of identification rhetoric) exponentially powerful. It builds from the ongoing reality of the human identity because the human existence moves toward an end and, sometimes, a painful end.

The second component to advancing Witness claims about the dismal condition of the present time ties to the way they manufacture an unpleasant experience with the world. The reward focus for Witnesses does not rely on the present, but on the future. Hoffer explains that mass movements will often depict the present as miserable, dull, difficult, and repressive by denying group members basic pleasures via making such pleasures, and the pursuit of

individual happiness, immoral (69). This tactic functions well within the context of apocalyptic rhetoric because its reward exists in the future as opposed to the present. Religious movements enhance the rewards of the future by making "the present. . .a place of exile, a vale of tears leading to the heavenly kingdom" (Hoffer 70). O'Leary agrees with Hoffer's observation noting that, in his analysis of apocalyptic discourse, such discourse develops a sense of dissatisfaction and fear (11-2). When one views the world through a religious, apocalyptic terministic screen, one cannot help but long for the future paradise it promises.

The Watchtower contains many examples that depict the present as a time that none should want to embrace. Moreover, The Watchtower devotes much space to demoralizing the enjoyment of life while re-defining what should be enjoyed (proselytizing, Bible studies, attending Kingdom Hall meetings, etc.). A specific example of The Watchtower's discouragement of worldly things follows:

The apostle John admonishes Christians living in this hostile world: "Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world. . .Everything in the world - the desire of the flesh and the

desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life - does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world." (1 John 2:15, 16). . . .For this reason we dare not cultivate a desire for anything this world has to offer that could divert us from the truth [emphasis in original]. (1 Mar 2002: 14)

Not only do natural disasters, wars, and famines become evidence for Jehovah's apocalyptic plan, but also the Witness focus on limiting pleasures in their daily life - identifying them with the world, thus with Satan - keeps them from enjoying the present time. Such identification keeps Witnesses from feeling as though they miss out on anything this life has to offer. As a result, they long for the end because they believe the future will provide them with more pleasure than they could ever obtain while living in the current world.

Hoffer comments on what impact detesting the present has for a group, writing, "Fear of the future causes us to lean against and cling to the present, while faith in the future renders us receptive to change" (9). Initially, it may seem that fear drives the Witnesses to obedience; however, apocalyptic rhetoric manifests quite the opposite.

The Witnesses hope for the apocalypse. They do not desire to cling to the current world and, as a group, look forward to the fulfillment of Jehovah's plan. The apocalypse means an end to suffering. The Witnesses can let go of the current world if their rhetoric dissuades them from wanting to participate in many "worldly" activities.

Creating a Hopeful Future

While the Witnesses devote much of their literature to talking about the current depraved state of the world, filling the apocalyptic empty metaphor with evidence from their own lives, their literature also emphasizes (perhaps manufactures) a hopeful future world state (paradise). According to O'Leary, apocalyptic rhetoric contains both symbols of despair and hope (69). The despair resides in the present (and in portions of the past where disasters and suffering are referred back to), while hope gets projected into the future. Since despair and evil consubstantially identify, they both evidence the existence of God's plan, making it a necessity. The Watchtower claims, "Millions have suffered because of the shortcomings of human leadership. Many have been victims of deceit, injustice, fraud. Orphans, widows, the hungry, and many others, need true hope. Well, Jehovah is 'the God who

gives hope'" (15 Apr 1975: 243). Clearly, this problem cannot resolve according to human effort alone. Instead, God must provide a hopeful end to the problems of humankind.

Though the apocalypse symbolizes the war between good and evil, the Witnesses consider it a different type of war than those wars perpetuated by human systems. The Watchtower even contrasts human war with the idea of the divine war, as it states:

Did the horrors of World War I and II. . .clean up the bad system of things and provide the foundation for a righteous world? God's war at Armageddon is the best thing that could possibly happen to our globe because it will do just that! Only Armageddon can clear the way for a righteous earthly state where man-made causes of sorrow, pain and death will be permanently removed. - Rev. 21:14...The word "Armageddon," then, should not cause fear or dread to well up, but rather, anticipation and hope, both for it and for what lies beyond it [emphasis in original]. (1 Sep 1975: 576)

Again, The Watchtower employs the rhetoric of identification (and division) here as it distinguishes the human from the divine. The outcome of this distinction makes terms, such as apocalypse and "Armageddon," synonymous with hope instead of fear.

The Watchtower gives the ideas stated in the above quotation deeper significance, via the rhetoric of identification, by emphasizing that not all will experience such hope. The Watchtower states, "Holding out a marvelous hope, [Jesus] made known that some would be spared, with a prospect of 'everlasting life' before them (Matt. 24:22; 25:46)" and that "By taking appropriate action now, you may be one of those survivors. - Zeph. 2:2, 3" [emphasis added] (1 May 1975: 272). That only some shall be spared leads to the possibility that most will not be spared, particularly if without taking the appropriate action. As Burke theorizes, the rhetoric of identification motivates action. One must take action to belong. The action that the quotation refers to has a value attached to it also, inducing the principles of morality (thus judgment) since certain actions constitute "appropriate." Finally, the emphasis on hope makes taking appropriate action (which, as explained above, means making certain sacrifices by denying

worldly pleasures and taking up the labor of proselytizing) worthwhile.

Though the Witnesses focus on the hope associated with the apocalypse, many label them a "doomsday cult." The Witnesses acknowledge this label, but they try to re-cast how they are perceived, writing:

Contrary to the accusations against them, Jehovah's Witnesses are not an 'apocalyptic sect' or a "doomsday cult." They do, however, accept the Apocalypse, or book of Revelation, as a part of the inspired Word of God. . . .But in their public witnessing, God's servants focus mainly on the wonderful hope set out in the Bible. . . .

[emphasis added]. (WT 1 Dec 1999: 9)

While the Witnesses focus on the apocalypse as their primary group motivation, they also focus on how the essential "hope" contained within their apocalyptic rhetoric. When Witnesses proselytize, this hope comprises a key part of their message; however, they must also arouse the despair within their audience (and this includes themselves) for the hope to develop significant meaning. Symbols of hope must alternate with symbols of despair for each to have any powerful significance in apocalyptic

rhetoric. The Witness focus on hope allows them to project themselves as a symbols of joy and happiness - which could attract potential converts who desire to feel that sense of hope, joy, and ultimately, belonging.

In fact, the message of hope even affects the way the Witnesses view death. The Watchtower claims, "We do not fear death as do those who have no hope" (1 Aug 2002: 19). The lack of fear of a physical death contributes to their refusal of blood-transfusions, which they believe the Bible mandates. The Witnesses argue that they do not desperately try to hold onto their physical life, for themselves or for their loved ones, ". . .as if this life were everything" (qtd. in Botting and Botting 30). To Witnesses this life offers nothing worth holding onto so future rewards become a group focus. As a result, the Witnesses explain, "So while we all have our problems and challenges, as we face this day of Jehovah, we have every reason for being the most joyful people on the face of the earth" (WT 1 May 2002: 24).

The images they present in their literature depict such joy. The images of joyful and happy Witnesses provide images of themselves upon which they can gaze; thus, they can conclude that they are joyful and happy because they

are Witnesses. Botting and Botting explain that an image used frequently within Witness literature is the image of the Great Crowd, which depicts a multiracial group of believers to emphasize a global unity (103). Figure 13 below represents this Great Crowd in a joyful group state.



Figure 13. A Sense of Happiness and Belonging for a Witness.

Source: What Does the Bible Really Teach? Brooklyn: The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2005. 150.

Conversely, as O'Leary suggests, despair must accompany any hope and joy presented. As such, Witness literature also contains images of despair and consequence. Figure 7 illustrates the way Witnesses depict despair.

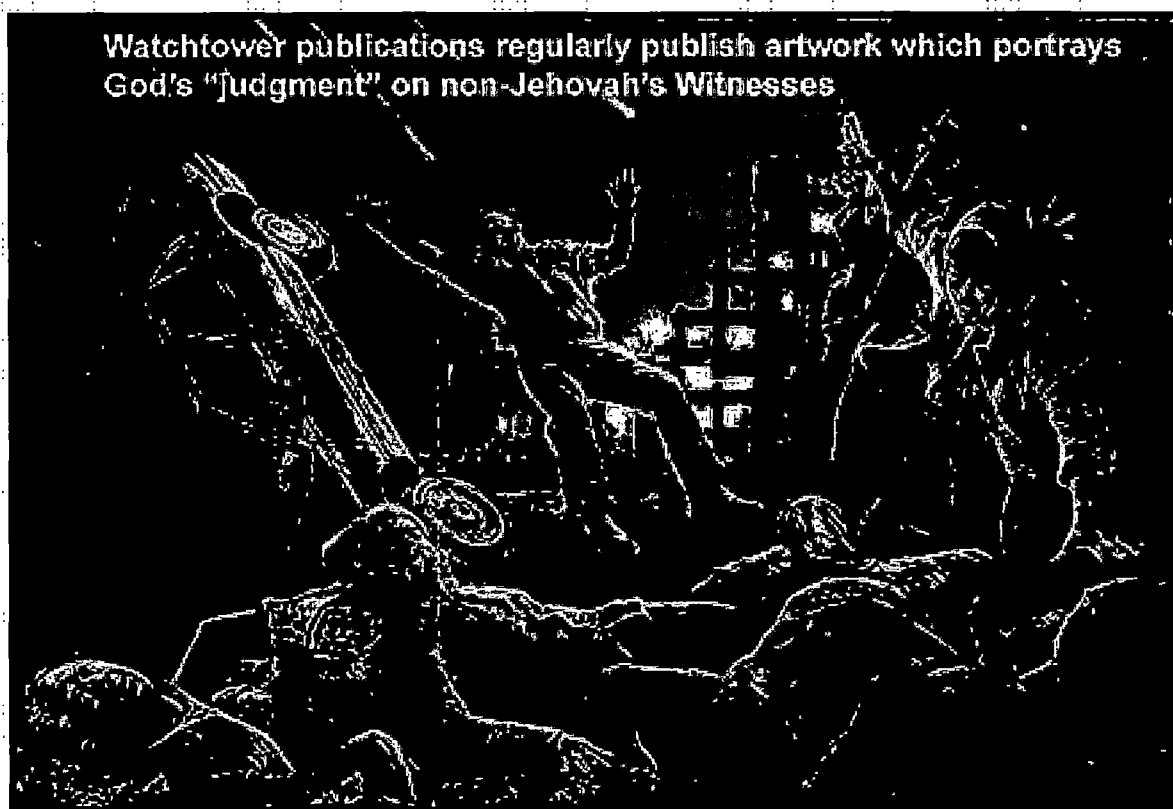


Figure 14. Despair and Annihilation as Depicted in Witness Literature.

Source: Blizzard, Paul. "The Inside Story of a Former Third Generation Jehovah's Witness." 2009. Web. Armageddon image. 23 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.watchthetower.net/Test.html>>.

Depression and Death

While their rhetoric identifies them as a joyful group, and while their images project the ultimate rewards of paradise and happiness, a deep sadness exists within the Witnesses. In fact, the sadness can grow so deeply that Witnesses will seek professional help and will take antidepressants. In severe cases, some Witnesses will commit suicide. According to the JW Info Line, many Witnesses have contemplated suicide due to the tremendous pressure on what they must do to survive the apocalypse and inherit paradise (n.pag.). John Ankerberg and John Weldon quote Dr. John Stedman as saying:

Psychiatrists and others who have worked with Jehovah's Witnesses have been aware for a number of years that both the mental illness rate and suicide rate is very high among the Witnesses. . . . Indeed the rate is so high that some hospitals are literally "stuffed with JW's" - one mental hospital is nicknamed "The Watchtower House" because the number of JW's is so high (151).

Explanations for the high rate of suicide and mental illness exist. In his dissertation, Jerry Bergman explains that the high rate of mental illness occurs because

Witnesses "slavishly devote their time and energy to serving an organization that does not care about them as individuals" and that "Many feel they are trapped in a way of life in which virtually every alternative is undesirable" (qtd. in Ankerberg and Weldon 153). Thanks to the features of their apocalyptic/identification rhetoric, the Witnesses have no desirable alternatives outside of their group. They strive to divide themselves from everything that resides outside of their group leaving them without alternatives.

Because the rhetoric of identification relies upon one's sense of identity to function, risks to the health of that identity exist. One may lose their sense of self at the cost of belonging to a group that uses identification rhetoric to attain and retain group members. For those who seek security and a sense of belonging, losing a sense of individuality can be desirable; however, because belonging and security are sought, that makes them key targets to use for punishment to help maintain group membership.

The threat and act of disfellowshipping (or the idea of apocalyptic annihilation) induces feelings of isolation and abandonment. One's inability to meet rigid moral standards set in place (tied to ethics and choice-making)

can create severe guilt and shame, which can lead to depression and hopelessness. Despite the heavy emphasis on "hope," feelings of hopelessness do occur. Hope can have a price. Having hope in this environment requires obedience to the group's mandates because Jehovah requires such obedience. Obeying the group becomes consubstantial with obeying Jehovah.

In fact, The Watchtower even argues that dying for Jehovah symbolizes an act of obedience. The Watchtower refers to the story of Abraham and how God commanded him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to prove his love. The Watchtower responds to this example:

Some may think that Jehovah God was asking too much of Abraham. But was he? Is it really unloving for our Creator, who can resurrect the dead, to ask us to be obedient to him even if this should result in our sleeping temporarily in death? Jesus Christ and his early followers did not think so. They were willing to suffer physical abuse, even death itself, in order to do God's will. . . .If circumstances called for it, would you be willing to do the same? (15 Sep 1999: 18)

Multiple identifications take place in the aforementioned quotation. First, the identification with Abraham takes place. Abraham symbolizes one of God's chosen people. The Witnesses consider themselves, also, a people chosen by God; therefore, a linkage develops between the Witnesses and Abraham. Similarly, the illustration of Abraham can make the disfellowshipping of immediate family members an easier and justified action. Second, Jesus, himself, becomes a focus, which calls to mind all of the injustice he experienced in the name of God. The Witnesses then call to mind all of the injustices they perceive against their group and this reinforces the linkage between their identity and Jesus' identity. With these identifications, death becomes an act of love for Jehovah.

Finally, with the Witness emphasis rejecting the current world, death becomes nothing to fear, especially with the Witness understanding that death is only temporary for obedient ones. The Watchtower claims that Jehovah will lovingly, and without fail, ". . .transform the earth into a paradise populated with perfect, obedient, and happy people. (Luke 23:42, 43)" [emphasis added] (WT 15 Aug 1999: 15). Perfection and happiness become consubstantial with obedience. Each term shares a relationship with the other.

Such an association among happiness, perfection, and obedience gets further reinforced with the idea that, "obedient Christians will not be punished when destruction comes on. . .the wicked system" (WT 1 May 1999: 20).

It's Only a Matter of Time

Considering the focus on the end in apocalyptic rhetoric, time becomes a mandatory symbol. This symbol can offer some sense of relief for Witnesses because "the end" means an end to both world suffering and individual suffering. It also means a paradise beginning; however, the symbol of time can create more issues than it solves due to shifting interpretations, which result from time's passing without the occurrence of certain predicted events.

Time in apocalyptic rhetoric encompasses the past, present, and future with each component sharing a relationship. Time, presented in this linear fashion, ties directly to lived experience (humans all experience a beginning, middle, and end in their lives). Humans, therefore, identify with a narrative experience. Because humans are subject to an inevitable end (death), apocalyptic notions do not seem far-fetched. It seems a logical deduction that if an individual's life ends, so too

must life, as a whole, end. This deduction gives the claims tied to apocalyptic rhetoric a notion of possibility, even if the claims themselves seem grandiose or supernatural.

Time has both a concrete and an abstract nature, also. Linguistically, Burke explains the dual properties associated with time. He writes that time occurs in ". . .the succession of words in a sentence. . . .But the meaning of the sentence is an essence. . .that is not confined to any of the sentence's parts, but rather pervades or inspirits the sentence as a whole" (Religion 28). In this way, human language contains characteristics of both fixedness, in that a sentence exists concretely, and fluidity of meaning, especially depending on the audience and its terministic screen. The words of a sentence must advance, in a time sense, yet the meaning of the sentence can transcend this time, occupying any space.

Time, itself, operates similarly. It contains a fixed nature in that 12:00 can be captured on a clock. Months, days, and years get counted. Such fixedness gives time an objective quality that can be marked, measured, and recorded (these records can then become symbols). Though time can be marked, what it marks can be infinitely

interpreted under the guise of being objective fact. Even further, Whorf explains that, because time gets "objectified" (records of events are captured and given a time attribution), humans will conceive of the future in ways similar to how the past is perceived. As a result, the past becomes a model to use to project future outcomes (153).

The Witnesses use the past as a model to help them construct their future. This model contributes to the consubstantial relationship they develop with first century Christians and themselves - so that the prophecies of the past become a model for prophecies they expect to experience. In this way, the Witnesses' share an identity with first century Christians. Since the Bible documents the first century Christians' experiences, and the Bible represents an accurate record of fact (especially considering the "objectified" nature of the chronology it contains), this documentation and identification serves as a way for Witnesses to see themselves written into the past and the future - all as a part of Jehovah's plan.

For instance, the story of Noah provides a past time and event that the Witnesses use repeatedly to make plausible their predictions about the arrival of the

apocalypse. The Witnesses identify Noah and the flood with the present and future. For example, The Watchtower explains:

Jesus foretold that our day would parallel the days of Noah. God has again determined to destroy the wicked and has set a time for this to happen. (Matthew 24:36-39). He has also set things in motion for the preservation of the righteous. Whereas Noah was to build an ark, God's servants today are to proclaim Jehovah's purposes, teach his Word, and make disciples. - Matthew 28:19. (15 Aug 1999: 18)

The example assumes that the reader accepts the Bible as a record of fact and that the events it records have actually happened. O'Leary argues that "The demonstration of the historical accuracy of past predictions functions as a powerful argument in support of the authority of the Bible as divinely revealed truth" (147). The following excerpt from The Watchtower reveals how Witnesses demonstrate historical accuracy:

Bible prophecies are part of "the word of God [which] is alive and exerts power." (Hebrews 4:12) The already fulfilled prophecies of the

Bible provide a pattern of Jehovah's dealings with people and reveal vital features of his purposes and personality. (15 Jul 1999: 6)

Since the Bible represents a living, powerful symbol for God and his message, prophecies of the past absorb the same living and powerful features. Prophecies also evidence the rationale for the occurrence of real world events.

The story of Noah parallels what the Witnesses think they experience. Like Noah, each Witness received a Jehovah-inspired warning (either from Witness parents or from Witnesses that made a visit). They then act upon what that warning calls them to do. Since Noah was saved, they can draw the same conclusion for themselves. The Witnesses use Noah so prominently that Gary Botting, a former Witness, could not even decipher between Noah and one of the Watchtower presidents, Nathan H. Knorr, until older than six (x-xi). The identification between the Witnesses and the first century Christians gives Bible prophecies validity because the Witnesses see themselves as a part of the lineage involved in Jehovah's unfolding plan. In seeing themselves, they become an audience for themselves, which speaks to Burke's self-as-audience concept. Through their consubstantial identification with first Century

Christians and what they experienced, combined with what present day Witnesses experience, the Witnesses can live in the past, present, and future with each segment containing relevant events (symbols) that represent Jehovah's unfolding plan.

The self-as-audience concept contributes to the possibility for living in the past, present, and future as O'Leary writes, "The history of apocalyptic interpretation. . .features a continually operating dialectic of the Now and Not-yet, and oscillates between reading the text as prediction and experiencing it as enactment" (202). Similarly, Burke argues that "final causes" are future-focused; however, the actions that occur in the present contribute to the fulfillment of the final cause. Consequently, "'final causes' are not future at all, but continually present. . .until attained or abandoned" (Religion 246). When one acts for certain purposes (i.e. perpetuating one's identity), one enters into a "self"-fulfilling prophecy of sorts. It becomes difficult to see oneself apart from the language and the culture of the group with which one identifies; thus, one develops a terministic screen that determines one's worldview.

The Time is at Hand. The past, present, and future share a flexible relationship to each other in terms of how far apart each segment lies on the time continuum. In Witness literature, the past and future are perceived as residing closely to the present time, which reinforces further the notion that the present behaviors tie directly with the unfolding plan (or prophecy). An example follows from The Watchtower:

THE prophet Malachi was inspired by God to record prophecies of awesome events that will take place in the very near future. These events will affect every person on earth. Malachi 4:1 foretells: "Look! The day is coming that is burning like the furnace, and all the presumptuous ones and all those doing wickedness must become as stubble" [emphasis added]. (1 May 2002: 19)

The example uses an ancient Biblical prophet and projects his message to apply to the "very near future." Though Malachi could be prophesying for a time within the scope of his very near future, the Witnesses nevertheless read his words as applicable to their day because their present and the Biblical past become consubstantial.

A blurred distinction exists between the prophetic experiences of the Witnesses and the prophetic experiences of first century Christians. The Watchtower makes a direct link between the Witnesses and first century Christians in the following:

Like first-century Christians, we need to "pay more than the usual attention" to the truth of God's Word. Why? Because we too face an impending destruction, not just of one nation, but of an entire system of things (Revelation 11:18; 16:14, 16). . . .Hence, we should be on guard against anything that could distract us. We need to pay attention to God's Word and maintain a keen sense of urgency [emphasis added]. (15 Sep 2002: 12)

The notion of urgency expressed in the example keeps Witnesses focused on their group's primary objective (i.e. obedience to Jehovah) to avoid the destruction that those of the past suffered because they did not heed the warning.

In a Watchtower article titled, "Who Will Survive?," writers cite Zephaniah 1:14, which reads "'The great day of Jehovah is very near. It is near, and there is a hurrying of it very much,'" and to survive, the article advises that

Witnesses “. . . be determined to act in harmony with God’s righteous requirements” (1 May 2002: 20). The reduction in time provides a motivation for the believer to choose obedience. It also provides a sense of relief (a Witness will not have to be obedient and make sacrifices for too long). In fact, believing in the urgency of the message becomes moralized. The Watchtower argues that spiritual weakness develops out of a loss of urgency in the midst of spiritual warfare (15 Apr 1999: 20). When one does not believe in the impending and close threat of the message, one may wane in one’s spiritual fervor. Such a relaxed attitude threatens the perpetuation of the group and the spreading of its message.

Though the Witnesses have established hard dates to mark both prophetic events of the past and future, since 1975, they have stopped setting specific dates for no declared reason. Though they have not continued to set dates, they still successfully manufacture and reinforce a general sense of urgency among themselves, which helps to keep the group motivated and fervent in its purpose to usher in the apocalypse.

Chapter 5 will explore theories on how and why groups, such as the Witnesses, maintain their apocalyptically-

defined group identity despite failed apocalyptic prophecies. Chapter 5 will emphasize the power of identification rhetoric, as applied through the principles of apocalyptic rhetoric, especially since groups continue to exist, despite their failed prophecies. Finally, Chapter 5 will also briefly expand on how apocalyptic rhetoric operates similarly in other human sociopolitical groups, allowing for the opportunity to expand upon the research conducted for this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUCCESSFUL APOCALYPTIC GROUPS WITH FAILED
PROPHECIES: AREAS FOR EXPANDED RESEARCH

Humanity's Focus on the End

A central feature of the apocalypse remains when it shall take place. As time passes with the apocalypse failing to appear, however, one may wonder if the apocalypse will ever take place (at least, the one predicted to occur on a grand, cosmic scale). Groups with an apocalyptic association do not seem to ask the latter question, and this study explores why groups with previously failed prophecies do not ask such questions. Instead, these groups continue to thrive on the notion of when apocalyptic events will occur, and they use this notion to motivate their ongoing existence.

Bromley argues that "apocalypticism is more likely to constitute a moment in a group's history rather than a stable, long-term form of organization" (42). While this idea seems logical, groups such as the Witnesses, demonstrate the opposite as they continue to grow. This

chapter will suggest closing reasons for why and how groups maintain their apocalyptic identity despite the failure of their prophecies. Such reasons all reinforce the prevalence of identification rhetoric within such groups and will provide pathways for deeper research on the significance of identification rhetoric in society, particularly regarding how the idea of apocalypse forms and maintains other types of societal groups.

Humanity seems to have an insatiable curiosity about the possibility for "the end." Museums contain skeletons of dinosaurs that are thought to have perished on such a grand scale due to an asteroid, disease, famine, or any other number of (unproven) theories. The question cannot be ignored: could the same destiny befall humanity? Even the Witnesses argue that, throughout time, humans have felt a need for "trustworthy prediction regarding the future" because "As intelligent creatures, we humans study the past, are aware of the present, and are especially interested in the future" (WT 15 Jul 1999: 4). Predictions of all sorts have been and are being made; however, what makes for a trustworthy prediction source is debatable (except for those who have selected their version of a

"trustworthy" source. This study hopes to offer possible reasons for why certain sources are selected.)

While humans may have an interest in knowing how the end will arrive (assuming it will), there are those who specifically associate "the end" with a divine catalyst. The Witnesses comprise such a group, yet they are not the only group. Robbins and Palmer write that ". . .a 'millennial myth' of biblical origin is deeply ingrained in American culture and represents a major cultural resource for the interpretation of unsettling events and trends" (4). Humans seek out explanations for what they perceive to be unjust or unexplained catastrophes. Their lack of explanation or understanding more easily attributes to the divine realm from which humans are exempt in their current life state.

While the "millennial myth" pervades American culture, so too does the failure of such a myth when ascribed a specific timeframe. Robbins and Palmer argue that "The possibility of 'failed prophecy' . . .haunts apocalyptic movements" (11). At the same time, while O'Leary acknowledges the reality of failed predictions through the centuries, he argues that ". . .the failure of these predictions has not lessened the appeal of this discourse

to its believers" (7). The continued existence of the Witnesses as a group provides a prime example of O'Leary's observation. I hope that this study highlights possible reasons for why and how the Witnesses have remained a group (despite their failed prophecies) via their use of the principles of identification rhetoric housed within their apocalyptic rhetoric. This chapter specifically focuses on what happened following the Witnesses' failed prophecy of 1975 as an example of how and why failed prophecies do not always lead to the failure of the group despite the failure of the prophecy itself.

Identifying the rhetorical methods the Witnesses use, and the ways in which they use them to cope with failed prophecies, can be helpful in identifying similar methods at work other apocalyptic groups (religious or non-religious). An example of such a group could be those that ascribe to environmentalist movements, with their incessant predictions that the earth will run out of resources shortly, thus resulting in global devastation and catastrophe. Observing the rhetorical methods these groups use - even groups to which one may belong - makes apocalyptic groups' methods more transparent. Such transparency allows people to better understand what

motivates their own behaviors (such as the value of making certain life sacrifices), especially if they belong to a group with an apocalyptic persuasion. It could help them to identify why they belong to such a group at all.

A Marked Date: 1975

The year 1975 became a significant time for the Witnesses as it was the year that their literature specified as the arrival of the apocalypse. The 1975 date was initially established in 1966, and by 1968:

. . .the prophecy had been established in the minds and imaginations of the Witnesses by public speeches and articles. . . . Systematic psychological pressure mounted as the decade of the seventies dawned and in 1970 and 1971 the number of active Witnesses increased by 20 percent to 1.5 million in August 1971 [emphasis added]. (46)

The urgency of the impending date clearly had an impact upon the proselytizing efforts of the Witnesses with the increase in their membership; however, the lack of a specific day during the year 1975 also helped create a sense of urgency. This lack of specificity meant that, at

any point during 1975, the apocalypse could arrive. The Watchtower explained that, despite the lack of a date, "'We should not think that this year of 1975 is of no significance to us,' for the Bible proves that Jehovah is 'the greatest chronologist' and 'we have the anchor date, 1914, marking the end of the Gentile times'" (1 May 1975: 285).

Despite the use of chronology, 1975 never produced the kind of apocalypse the Witnesses depicted in their imagery. One would think, then, that the failure of the 1975 prophecy would have resulted in the overall belief that Jehovah is not "the greatest chronologist" or that the Witness beliefs altogether were somehow inaccurate. And yes, the Witnesses did incur losses. Botting and Botting explained that most Witnesses seemed numbed as opposed to shocked at the absence of the apocalypse in 1975 and that ". . .the number of publishers dropped 1 percent from 1976 to 1977, and the number of full-time preachers dropped from an all-time peak of 196,656 in 1976 to 124,459 in 1977 and 115,389 in 1978" (47). While the principles behind the group's apocalyptic rhetoric and rhetoric of identification did not work for all, they still worked for many then and even more now as the group membership continues to grow.

Though the failure of 1975 resulted in members falling away from the group, those that remained could then form a stronger group. Based on the principles discussed in this study (i.e. morality, feelings of guilt that require cleansing, (trustworthy) symbols of authority, facing an inevitable death, and the consubstantial identification between one's life events and those events identified in prophecies), it could be suggested that what held the remaining group together was not necessarily the prophecy itself, but rather simply a desire to belong, especially since all humans face death and want to live a worthwhile life, either on earth or in the afterlife. The aforementioned rhetorical principles further reinforced this desire to belong, creating a cycle from which one could not, or, more importantly, did not desire to escape. After all, where would one go? One's entire identity becomes the group's identity, which is reinforced via the shunning of everything outside of the group, especially when identified with "bad" or Satanic notions. Such shunning comprises the rhetoric of division.

The following Watchtower quotation illustrates the need to belong to the group, even despite doctrinal "changes":

"Accepting a change when it comes and adapting to it can be difficult," admits one longtime elder. . . . "Having the right attitude is key: Refusing to accept a refinement is to be left behind as the organization moves ahead. If I find myself in a situation where changes seem hard to accept, I reflect on Peter's words to Jesus: 'Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life.' Then I ask myself, 'Where shall I go away to-out there into the darkness of the world?' This helps me to hold firmly to God's organization." - John 6:68 (15 Feb 2006: 30).

Again, in the quotation above, the focus remains on being left out or left behind - not on the changing doctrines and failing prophecies. The Witnesses build their group as a place to belong and to identify with others who share similar fears of being lost in darkness. Essentially, the text states outright that there have been (and will be) doctrinal changes; however, these should not render the group and its beliefs invalid. One should merely change with the changes or face desolation.

The Watchtower and Bible Tract Society did eventually address the failure of 1975, but waited until 1980 to do

so. The Society claimed that publications that referenced 1975 only referred to it as a "possibility," but that it was interpreted, incorrectly, by readers to mean "probability" [emphasis added] (Botting and Botting 48). It remains unclear why the Society felt compelled to address the failure at all. Those adherents that remained did not seem to need convincing considering their choice to remain with the group; however, it would prove beneficial to begin to teach adherents the notion that they may have misread or misinterpreted the Society's apocalyptic message as opposed to being presented with wrong information by the Society (thus Jehovah). Such rhetorical methodology speaks to Burke's cycle of guilt and to pre-accepted notions of authority. It may be difficult for an adherent to believe that such an authority could or would mislead followers.

Bader writes, "A fulfilled prophecy makes real what one previously had to take on faith. A failed prophecy, on the other hand, demonstrates that one's faith was mistaken" (119). As evidenced above, Witness literature implies that the mistake lies with the reader, not the literature itself. Also, reinforcing the notion that the apocalypse is "possible" still encourages group members to have faith that it will eventually occur.

Re-Interpretation in Retrospect

Word symbols depend on context to attain meaning. O'Leary writes that every "apocalyptic sect that has survived the failure of its predictions has done so through a process of symbolic negotiation. . ." (199). Casting a failed prophecy as a partial success can re-energize a failed prophecy for future application. To cast a failed prophecy as a partial success, one must identify a current failed prophecy with a "successful" past prophecy so that the attributes of the "successful" past prophecy get identified with the current failed prophecy. For example, the Witnesses reflect on those prophecies they believe were already fulfilled in the Bible. The Watchtower poses the following questions to its readers:

Did not God's words to Noah come true regarding the great deluge and the means for surviving it when the wicked were destroyed? (Gen. 6:17-19; 8:15-19). Did not God's promise to Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son in their old age see fulfillment? (Gen. 17:19; 21:1-3). . . . Finally, by the mouth of his greatest prophet, his own son, Jesus Christ, Jehovah foretold another desolating of Jerusalem. This was

fulfilled in 70 C.E. when the Roman armies. .
.destroyed Jerusalem and her glorious temple. (1
Feb 1975: 82)

The quotation reminds Witnesses that prophecies were, in fact, fulfilled. This reminder can show Witnesses that Jehovah has acted before, thus, he can act again.

This method of focusing on past success to rebuff the failure of present prophecies, according to Zygmunt, operates off the idea that the belief system provides a foundation for its prophetic beliefs through the "selective perception of 'objective' events," which provide a sense of "empirical evidence" (944). The following Watchtower excerpt illustrates Zygmunt's argument. It reads, "The Flood was an expression of Jehovah's interest in the earth. It provided undeniable evidence that God would not always let wickedness hold sway but would, in his due time, fulfill the promise about the 'seed.' - (Gen. 6:3)" [emphasis added] (1 Feb 1975: 83). The Witnesses' apocalyptic beliefs survive based on their initial acceptance of past prophecies and upon the acceptance of "evidence" associated with those prophecies (i.e. they believe the flood actually occurred); thus, if they accept that past prophecies were successfully fulfilled, the

possibility for the fulfillment of future prophecies remains.

Another method of re-casting prophecies deals with the flexible interpretation of time. In fact, O'Leary suggests that ". . .through the rhetorical construction and reconstruction of time itself, apocalyptic communities continually renew and regenerate themselves" (125). Time is a symbol that can be viewed through a flexible terministic screen, depending on the context that frames time. For instance, the Witnesses argue that Jehovah's view of time and a human's view of time differ significantly, stating that one thousand years equates to one day as humans perceive it (WT 1 May 1975: 276). This varied interpretation of time allows for flexibility of interpretation, while also reinforcing the notion that no one truly knows when the apocalypse will arrive. All one needs to believe (or be made to believe) is that the end is possible.

Another way to re-cast a failed prophecy involves arguing that the prophecy was, in fact, partially fulfilled. The Witnesses are not the first apocalyptic group to use such re-casting. If it was to survive the Great Disappointment of 1844, the Millerite movement

(discussed in Chapter 2) had to somehow develop what would constitute a fulfillment of the prophecy, while not being readily obvious and thus, open to disconfirmation (O'Leary 109). Festinger et al. writes that "some Millerites, after the last disconfirmation, even ventured the opinion that the Second Coming had occurred, but that it had occurred in heaven and not on the earth itself" (30).

The Witnesses use this mechanism of re-casting to argue that something significant did, in fact, occur during an apocalyptic prediction year. They rely on the relationship between secular and sacred events to argue the partial fulfillment of a prophecy. For example, they predicted that 1914 would produce the apocalypse. Instead, when the apocalypse "failed" to arrive, the Witnesses claimed that the prophecy actually described the invisible release of Satan upon the earth, which manifest itself into the development of World War I (WT: 1 Nov 1999: 15). This interpretation made the year 1914 significant, while also allowing for it to exist as a progression towards the apocalypse. Satan's release upon the earth would unleash events that would then move humanity closer to the final battle. Zygmunt argues that such partial fulfillment, when ascribed a supernatural component, cannot be readily

disconfirmed (934). Further, there no want exists to disconfirm the supernatural claim when it identifies with secular events. The relationship between the sacred and the secular then provides the necessary empirical evidence to support claims about supernatural events.

Similarly, though 1975 did not produce the apocalypse (at least, in a readily identifiable sense), the Witnesses did experience exponential growth during that year. Botting and Botting argue that this becomes a "symbol of significance" (62). Though the Witnesses lost many members in years subsequent to 1975, they view this only as a strengthening of their group. Remaining members became a true following, while those that left were cast as weak or morally inept. Every event perceived through the Witness terministic screen can be interpreted in the group's favor. Burke writes about how ideas can shift because one can temporize one's stance on something, making it flexible. Burke writes, "'Each time the conditions change, [one] can rephrase [his or her] objections accordingly, by stating them in terms of the new conditions'" (qtd. in Carter "Kenneth Burke" 356). Burke uses one's view on war as an example, writing that one can say one does not oppose war for all time, just at this time (356). The Witnesses

operate similarly. Believers will shift their belief in a failed prophecy to the next available option.

One such option involves the idea that when a failed prophecy is re-cast as a partial success, it becomes part of a progression toward the final apocalypse - a step closer to the end. Even O'Leary argues that apocalyptic groups survive repeated disconfirmations of their prophecies by a process of "discursive reformulation that continually ties [the] apocalypse to the present by reconceiving the relationship of past and future" (17). In this way, the apocalypse represents more of a timeline than an actual event; a timeline that connects the events of the past, both secular and sacred, with both present and future outcomes. The Witnesses refer to this progression as "increasing light," which then makes "light" a powerful and multi-purpose symbol for the group.

David Bromley refers to this progressive concept as "the prophetic method," which is based on the idea of revelation over time (32). Bromley writes that this method involves ". . .drastic revisions of traditional meanings or production of new texts that expand upon existing ones, as new revelations are received" (37-8). New knowledge continually renews interest and helps one remain with a

group from which the new knowledge derives, especially considering that an already established authority (both Jehovah and the Governing Body) reveals this knowledge. These progressive revelations perpetuate a long-term relationship because they foster one's dependency upon one's group to provide new knowledge. Missing out on important knowledge regarding the apocalypse could prove life threatening in both an earthly and eternal sense.

Evidence of new light or increasing light can be found in The Watchtower. For example, The Watchtower states:

For good reason, Jehovah does not flood us with a constant downpour of exciting new things.

Rather, he sheds increased light on his Word gradually, progressively. (Proverbs 4:18) This allows his people to assimilate and put into practice the things they learn. (15 Aug 1999: 27)

This verbiage provides two important notions. The first notion speaks about Jehovah providing increasing light over time. The explanation as to why God reveals this increasing light gradually ties to the second notion, which is the emphasis on how the Witnesses conduct themselves. The Witnesses acknowledge that they put on a new personality. They also acknowledge that adopting a new

personality takes time, and may even need some adjustment based on whatever "new light" gets shed. As such, the Witnesses' apocalyptic rhetoric motivates the kind of behavior that keeps them in line with the (changing) belief system; however, they must change with it. Changing oneself does not happen overnight; thus, providing information gradually about how one should conduct one's self would enable a smoother and stronger identity formation over time.

The Watchtower even states "While the world remains in dense darkness, the true God continues to shed light upon people" and that "Increasing light from Jehovah continues to illuminate the path of his people. It refines them organizationally, doctrinally, and morally" (15 Feb 2006: 26). Again, a distinction exists between those who live in the darkness of the world and those who have light shed upon them. Such a notion creates the idea that those who have light shed upon them are worthy of such light. Apocalyptic rhetoric motivates one to continually be worthy of the group (or entity) that promises hope. Even further, to have light shed upon oneself also relates to the idea that one cannot hide one's dark transgressions. Light symbolizes a revelation of prophecy as well as a revelation

of one's sins. One thus strives to walk in a path of light as opposed to darkness.

The Witnesses respond, as noted above, organizationally, doctrinally, and morally to this symbol of "light." A focus with these three characteristics helps the Society blame its own members for the failure of a prophecy if they were not, in fact, living up to Jehovah's standards, which foster's Burke's "guilt" and a constant need to return to the group for guidance.

Botting and Botting suggest that if a prophecy fails to appear, and this prophecy is not re-cast as a partial success, the next line of reasoning provided pertains to testing the group members. According to Botting and Botting, "As the official history explained, 'A flood of new spiritual truths came to Jehovah's people, truths that further tested the devotion of those in line for the Kingdom'" (73). Clearly, the Society acknowledges and addresses its own string of prophetic failures, but again, in its addressing of them, it puts these failures on the heads of its own members. Yet, those who have remained with the group truly demonstrate a deep devotion. The Society wants this level of devotion to build the kind of group that will not fail itself. Again, the goal for the

Witnesses and those most susceptible to identification rhetoric speaks to satisfying a need to belong.

The constant emphasis on the need to perform the group's ascribed behaviors is also key to the power of the rhetoric of identification as it speaks to Burke's "action" component. The more one performs one's identity, and the more such behaviors are moralized, the stronger the formation of the identity because consequences for not maintaining such an identity become stronger (in this case, earthly or otherworldly annihilation results). Further, if a person commits himself or herself to a belief via actions that express one's commitment, even upon the disconfirmation of such a belief, the actions performed make it difficult to let go of the identity (Festinger et al. 4). Actions solidify one's identity because they constitute both an enactment of it.

Actions also require investment. One may not want to let go of something in which one invests personal interests. According to Bader, group members who have invested large amounts of time, energy, money, and social capital are least likely to leave a group, which contrasts with those members who have invested little and have the least to lose by leaving (130). The Witnesses may thrive

as a group simply because they are morally required to be so invested. They devote much time, energy, and social capital to proselytizing their beliefs and symbolizing Jehovah as their name implies. Role performance ensures group adherence. Even upon the failed prophecy of the Baha'i sect, it became extremely difficult for followers to abandon their beliefs since they had committed both publicly and privately to the prediction. In effort to cope with a failure, they focused their efforts on recruiting new group members (Balch et al. 74). The proselytizing efforts of the Witnesses following the failure of 1975 demonstrate a similar behavior. Zygmunt writes, ". . .the major source of identity validation was shifted from prophetic fulfillment to evangelization" (938). If a group requires a large amount of role performance, it increases its chances of retaining invested members, since action represents an outward expression of and investment in one's identity.

The above coping mechanisms speak to Burke's "I addressing its me" principle because there exists an element of self-deception at work to continue with a belief as though it is fact, despite its disconfirmation. According to Burke, self-deception allows for a range of

possibilities regarding rhetorical motive, which can operate without conscious direction by any particular agent (Rhetoric 1334). As implied, people may lack awareness of their self-deception by continuing to follow clearly disconfirmed beliefs. Holland expands on Burke's statement, writing that when a conflict arises within one's attitudes, rationalization occurs so that one may behave in a way that remains acceptable to the society in which one belongs. Holland claims that, such rationalization makes one become an "I addressing its 'me'" (51). O'Leary offers that any ". . .supposed inconsistency between belief and practice only presents a problem to those outside the belief system" [emphasis added] (173). This assertion makes logical sense since those outside the belief system do not identify with it and can obtain enough distance from the belief system to identify its apparent inconsistencies. When the "I addresses its me," very little objective distance exists.

No More Dates

The solution to avoiding the need to re-cast a prophecy and rationalize prophetic failure lies in not creating the kind of conditions that subject a prophecy to

possible failure. The May 1, 1999 Watchtower states, "This end is unquestionably coming even though we cannot pinpoint a date" (21). The Witnesses have yet to establish another solid date for the arrival of the apocalypse. The focus now remains on Matthew 24:36, where Christ tells the apostles "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows. . .but only the Father" (NWT). They reinforce the possibility of the apocalypse, while also reinforcing the notion that one must be morally ready for its appearance at any time. Shifting the focus from a specific time to an indistinct date allows for the argument that one should always be morally ready. The Watchtower advises "Surely it is far wiser to live daily in expectation of God's great day. This is the only course that will result in survival" (1 Jul 1975: 389). As such, failed dates are not so much the issue as members' faulty expectations and sinful states. The focus gets shifted away from the organization (external) and towards the individual member (internal).

Despite no longer using date setting, the Society officially holds "that the prophecy of Daniel applies totally to. . .modern nations, and that 'the present fulfillment of these prophecies shows that we are now living at the 'time of the end' (WT 15 July 1981: 6-7)"

(Botting and Botting 4). It seems that the Witness connection between their experiences and natural catastrophes provides enough concrete evidence to show that the present time lies within the scope of "the end." Their identity and associated behaviors are thus fostered and maintained out of such an ongoing notion.

The End - A New Beginning

As this study has shown, "the end" for most does not mean "the end," but rather a repetitive and recursive cycle that transforms ends into new or different beginnings. This cycle seems a logical outcome as apocalyptic arguments are inherently circular. Such arguments contain signs that repeat through time, such as wars, famines, sickness, natural disasters, etc. As discussed earlier, apocalyptic arguments tie in with the narrative because they involve the progression of time. Burke addresses both the progressive and recursive nature of narrative, writing:

Narrative implies the idea of a succession
(temporally speaking) and leads to the idea of an
outcome or fulfillment. Yet, beginnings and
endings can have a circular existence - always

relying on and implying each other. (Religion
217)

In this way, endings and beginnings come to share a consubstantial relationship with each becoming the other at some point. Again, this makes apocalyptic rhetoric ideal as an example of identification rhetoric because humans can identify with it temporally - all humans identify with the reality of time in their lives and that their lives have an "end." Moreover, apocalyptic rhetoric ties to the narrative because it is a form of narrative that tells about both beginnings and ends; yet, it remains one story that, despite being all about the end, rarely ends itself.

Areas for Expanded Research

Apocalyptic rhetoric is often thought to belong only to religious groups; however, because all humans live out a form of the apocalypse (they die), humans seem to possess a predisposition for accepting apocalyptic arguments in many forms simply because they can identify with them. Such identification makes apocalyptic notions highly (and silently) persuasive because they seem so "natural." As such, arguments with features of identification rhetoric/apocalyptic rhetoric move humans to act. For

instance, advertising bombards one with the notion that a deal will end after a short time, or that a particular item available for sale will run out; therefore, humans must act or miss out on a "good deal." This notion refers to the principle of "scarcity." Scarcity operates fundamentally off of the apocalyptic notion of finite amounts. A couple key questions to ask regarding further research could include: would this principle of scarcity appear in cultures that did not have the apocalypse so deeply embedded within it? What would advertising look like in cultures that do not dwell on "the end"? Do cultures exist that do not dwell on the end?

Unfortunately, human culture overall seems to contain apocalyptic notions, especially with the development of nuclear weapons. O'Leary writes that "The nuclear threat in particular seems to have fundamentally altered our religious situation by making the threat of planetary destruction credible to a much wider audience" (7). As a result, not only does the reality of nuclear threat make both the apocalypse and the religion that preaches about it more credible, but also the reality of nuclear threat fosters an even deeper cultural fear of the end (especially on a threatening grand scale), which then becomes a

terministic screen through which humans view life and aspects of life (i.e. the focus is not on life itself, but what threatens it).

McMurry outlines four prominent areas where the apocalypse and notions of "the end" appear in broader American culture (as opposed to only religious sects). These areas include: 1) military and war; 2) environmental degradation; 3) the crisis of meaning; and 4) politics and economics. Of the military and war category, McMurry writes that there exists a permanent "war footing" of the earth's major powers. This focus on building and maintaining one's military defenses becomes a normal characteristic of human culture. In line with Burke, and the rhetoric of identification, McMurry acknowledges that "'self-defense' informs all segments of policy, foreign and domestic. . . ." (par. 15). In essence, humans now conduct their relationships with one another in terms of protecting themselves from one another. In so doing, and as Burke notes, the language of war pervades human interaction because it occupies a large part of human life/identity. Identifications and divisions fostered by foreign and domestic policy language can undergo further exploration to understand how the rhetoric of identification, and the

apocalypse, inform and maintain human relationships as related to military and war.

Environmental degradation provides another prolific apocalyptic genre, which also involves the scarcity of earthly resources and time. McMurry writes that "Most of us are benumbed by the statistical evidence that points to our gross long-term mismanagement of the earth's reserves, its biota, and its atmosphere, soils, and water" (par. 19). As a result, McMurry argues that "Environmental apocalypticism is by now a familiar part of the landscape. . ." (par. 20). McMurry argues about how "normal" the apocalyptic landscape has become for humanity - so normal that humans may participate in their own demise simply because they are so exposed to apocalyptic scenarios that they no longer bring a necessary concern and panic to the situation. He writes that the apocalypse is, ". . .so integrated in everything that it no longer leads to panic. Without panic, people have no imperative to prevent the apocalypse, which will inevitably bring it upon us/to fruition" (par. 21-2). This concept ties to his third category - the crisis of meaning. The significance of crisis is reduced via apocalyptic overload and this

overload builds complacency; yet, humans still seem quite preoccupied with their demise.

Though statistics about environmental concerns exist, and though many humans still demonstrate a certain amount of passivity in the face of this potential threat, no shortage of literature exists about the environmental threat and increasing efforts to "go green"; therefore, another argument could be made that, while one may reject religious apocalyptic claims, he or she could still accept those claims made by environmental scientists, thinking these arguments are somehow more valid (perhaps because they are scientific).

Consequently, another area to investigate could be the language of books, news reports, and magazines that provide timelines and estimations about how much longer humans are said to have on the earth given its resources and how humans have responded to faulty predictions regarding the earth's demise and diminishing resources. (Is it the normalcy of the apocalypse that creates passivity or is it the lack of any real disaster?). It could be interesting to identify a possible correlation between the methods that surround apocalyptic prophecies of the religious and those that belong to environmentalist groups espousing

environmental catastrophe. Do environmental scientists and writers persuade using the rhetoric of identification in their apocalyptic predictions? Could environmental scientists override passivity by using additional features of identification rhetoric in their claims that perhaps exist in other, successful apocalyptic groups?

Finally, one could research the ways in which humans use politics and economics to respond to the apocalypse. Do political figures take advantage of apocalyptic scenarios to reap the benefits of being cast a certain type of "savior"? This question ties to the relationship between the rhetoric of identification and symbols of authority. Further, what economic gains and sacrifices are made through apocalyptic argument? Each of the suggested areas for further research could have a political or economic focus as they, like the apocalypse, pervade much of human life and identity.

Every arena suggested here (even additional religious belief systems) could benefit from deeper exploration regarding their prevalence and impact upon humans, their language, and their actions in terms of the features of their identification and apocalyptic rhetoric. This study remains far from complete.

The Ever Present End

Since the apocalypse (in various forms) pervades much of human culture, it is unfair to conclude that those who believe in the possibility of a grand scale apocalypse are irrational or ignorant. In fact, O'Leary suggests that with the increasing plausibility of apocalyptic scenarios, "it seems imperative to understand how our anticipations of the future may be both inspired and limited by the ancient logic of apocalypticism" (4). Clearly no shortage of apocalypticism exists in human culture. As such, Meeks writes that ". . .apocalyptic discourse lives on, as we all know, because it is pregnant with an almost infinite number of possible readings. That is its power and its danger" (462). It seems that even those who address the prevalence of the apocalypse cannot help but become apocalyptic themselves. In fact, according to McMurry:

. . .the notion of "scarcity" - whether in terms of time, food, wealth, or heavenly-seating room, and whether based on ecology, economics, or the Gospels - is a powerful means by which to limit freedoms and naturalize repressive social orders.
(par. 30)

Meeks echoes McMurry's concern, writing that because apocalyptic images possess power, "we should be wary of permitting those images to drive moral choice and moral formation" (471). As demonstrated in this study on the identification and apocalyptic rhetoric of the Witnesses, moral choice and formation tie inevitably to such forms of rhetoric, and it could be argued that certain freedoms get repressed as a result. The possibility for repression warrants the examination of such rhetoric and its outcomes.

However, Burke provides a note of optimism, in keeping with the apocalyptic tradition, writing "The rectilinear promise of progress is present, so far as the end of worldly governance is concerned. For if the natural order itself is being ended, any cycle of motives intrinsic to that order should end along with it" (Religion 233). Though Burke's words offer a notion of hope intrinsic to apocalyptic arguments, he still acknowledges the ongoing nature also associated with apocalyptic arguments, writing that:

However, the principle of governance (dominion, Covenant) is still thought to continue. . . .But insofar as the principle of worldly governance is thought to "continue". . .then by the same token

the principle of victimage might be expected to continue. . . (Religion 233).

In keeping with what apocalyptic arguments require (a relationship between hope and despair and endings and new beginnings), Burke's argument falls in line with the tradition. As such, the idea of the apocalypse forms a cyclical reality from which humans may never escape and consequently, with which they will always identify; thus:

Perhaps, just as the apocalyptic signs have always been with us, the End itself has always been present, though not unrecognized; perhaps the End is always near, if not as an absolute closure to temporality and history then as a normative standard against which our actions may be measured (O'Leary 219).

Only time will tell.

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